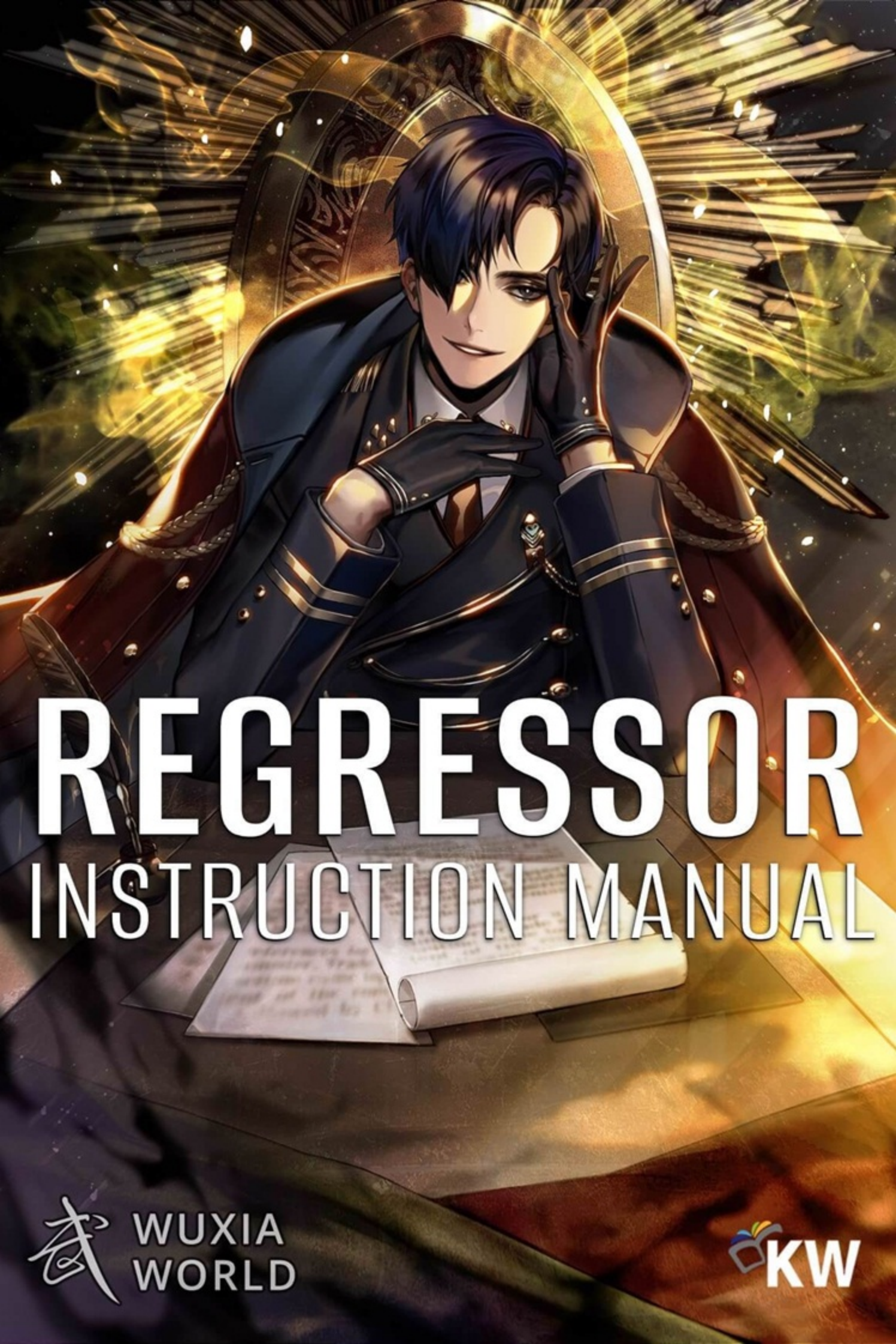
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
KW

# REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

## - VOLUME 21 -

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**[ WUXIAWORLD ]**

# CHAPTER 1001
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (8)

“What are you talking about?” an adventurer asked.

“We have to move now. It’s an order from headquarters.”

“Shouldn’t you at least explain the situation?” the adventurer questioned.

“It’s hard to explain. Anyway… you must move now, I mean, in four minutes,” they said.

“Damn it… what the hell are they talking about?” the adventurer asked.

I knew it was difficult to understand because it wasn’t an explanation those with combat-related jobs could understand. I had been a field commander for quite a while now, but I was having a hard time understanding the order even with my experience, so I was sure these adventurers were even more puzzled than me.

“I’m participating in the expedition as one of the field commanders. Shouldn't *I* at least know what’s going on?” I[1] asked.

“I’m sorry, but…” they paused.

It didn't happen that often, but conflict couldn't be avoided—both inside and outside dungeons. The need for experienced field commanders was going up. Clans and guilds recruited people for so-called administrative roles as if it was some kind of trend, but the adventurers' way of tackling dungeons hadn't really changed.

In other words, they had yet to adjust to the fact that field commanders were now a thing, and it was mostly because they were recruited in a hurry. They weren't ready yet.

It was similar to the issue that developing countries would have to tackle in exchange for their rapid economic development. The existence of the job called "Field Commanders" was problematic in the eyes of adventurers.

Those with combat-related jobs had no trust in field commanders, and they would all think that their way was the right way. They thought field commanders, who had no hunting or war experience, were idiots.

From our point of view, adventurers like those were the type to cause trouble.

It was undeniable that my reaction was my way of coping with my inferiority complex, which was caused by the fact that they thought of me as unimportant. However, it was also because of the ridiculous decision that my superiors had made.

More often than not, team annihilations were caused by the dumb decisions of the field commander. Of course, there were also incidents that happened because the team members had refused to cooperate with their commanders.

In fact, incidents like these were hot topics among those who were in the same field as me.

*'Still… '*

"It's an order from headquarters. I actually don't… I'll try contacting them again," the soldier said.

— You don't need to know the reason. Carry out the order. There are four minutes left before the start of the mission.

*'Damn it.'*

I left a message on the communication channel. I was sure the other field commanders were in a similar situation as me.

— You don’t need to know the reason. Three minutes and fifty-five seconds left before the start of the mission.

I was a Rank One Commander. I had access to a big chunk of the mission details and limited access to information that the Commander of the Republic and the Honorary Cardinal of the Democratic Country could access.

I decided to join this expedition under that condition in the first place.

"Requesting access to mission details. Rank One Field Commander, Codename Genius."

To be frank, there was no reason for me to know it, as my job was to simply follow the orders from headquarters, but…

*‘I need to know the mission details.’*

That way, we'd be prepared for any variables.

If I were a low-ranking commander, I wouldn’t do this, but I *did* have some authority.

However, the biggest reason was that I felt pressured about convincing those who were involved in the mission. I knew better than anyone else that I only managed to climb this position because of my drive.

*‘Please approve.’*

“…”

*‘Please… ’*

— Limited access has been authorized. There are three minutes and ten seconds before the start of the mission.

I couldn’t help but tighten my fist. However, my reaction didn’t last long.

“…”

“…”

“What the…” I mumbled.

“…”

“What the hell is this…” I said.

[Rafael’s Route 42 Sent]

[Requesting edit permissions]

[Request to edit approved]

[Request to edit 7th Unit’s mission details]

[Unit’s current location and Bahamut’s expected movement pathing]

[…]

[12.24% chance of Bahamut changing his pathing]

[…]

[Route 13 added to the expected route. Approved]

[…]

[42nd Unit is expected to have casualties. Edited.]

[…]

A myriad of screens appeared before my eyes. There were so many texts, coordinates, and routes that I couldn’t understand what was going on. There was also a map that looked like a maze.

To make things worse, the information was changing in real time, causing my jaw to drop to the floor. The location of the enemy and allies, routes given to everyone in the expedition group, and changes were all marked on the screen.

They were all changing at the same time, and there were so many changes happening in our strategy that I couldn't understand it at all. If I were to exaggerate, it was like I was watching a living organism.

Everything on the screen looked as if they all had a mind of their own.

The map looked like the entire Underground Temple, and I saw thousands—no, tens and thousands of lines crossing each other. It seemed like it was marking a soldier or predicting someone's movement pathing, but I couldn't figure it out.

I was able to figure out that the red line was the boss monster's pathing, but even the red line stretched out in hundreds of directions.

*'Those red lines are the paths that the boss monster* may *take.'*

I was literate, but I couldn't read this at all.

I had participated in many missions, but all these looked gibberish to me.

[There is a 92.5% chance that the 22nd Unit may successfully complete their mission.]

[Requesting edit permissions.]

[Request to edit approved.]

[There is a 99.1% chance that the 22nd Unit may successfully complete their mission.]

[Casualty Chance: 0.9%]

[Mission undertaking has been approved.]

*‘The success rate of a mission is displayed as a percentage?’*

They could calculate the chances of there being casualties based on the ongoing missions—no, the missions that they were creating within these four minutes?

[There is a 95.7% chance that the Blue Guild may successfully complete their mission.]

[Requesting edit permissions.]

[Request to edit approved.]

[There is a 99.8% chance that the Blue Guild may successfully complete their mission.]

[Casualty Chance: 0.2%]

[Mission undertaking has been declined.]

[Request to edit approved.]

[There is a 100% chance that the Blue Guild may successfully complete their mission.]

[Mission undertaking has been approved.]

There was no way a human being could do all this.

I wasn't even sure whether I understood what I was staring at or not, but I knew what they meant. I was sure they wouldn't let the others know. Even if all of this was created relatively quickly, headquarters wasn’t planning on notifying the others of this mission.

*‘That's a way to reduce the variables.’*

They… They probably looked at humans as if they were parts of a machine.

I was sure they thought that keeping us in the dark about what we needed to do and who we had to fight would reduce the variables. They wanted us to cast aside our feelings and simply execute their orders.

Otherwise, they wouldn't have calculated the chance of our survival.

It was different from bragging about how the success rate of a mission they had been preparing for three months was eighty or ninety percent. They were analyzing humans as if they were mere data and in a pretty thorough way at that.

Their analysis included everyone's nature and abilities.

*'Is it okay for me to look at something like this?'*

Headquarters had approved my request, but…

— There are one minute and nine seconds left before the start of the mission.

"Did you find out something?" one of the troops asked.

"I-I'm not sure. It's an order from headquarters," I replied.

"What are you staring at…" they asked.

"I'm not sure, b-but… we won't fail. We'll succeed no matter what," I told them.

I couldn't see my face right now.

Was I smiling, or did I look disgusted? Despite that…

— There are ten seconds left before the start of the mission.

We had to carry out the orders.

“Let’s get moving,” I ordered.

I had to start dishing out orders, as my unit was given six missions to tackle.

We were to move to the specified location, fire long-range spells at the marked coordinates, and scatter holy power around the place. Then, we'd move to the next specified location and treat the wounded there before moving to another specified location and joining the allied forces.

The mission hadn't started yet, so there was no one with any injuries among us. The mission we were about to carry out was created under the condition that the other units were going to suffer injuries.

They weren’t thinking about their deaths. Rather, they were worried about the possibility that there weren't going to be any casualties. I was sure they believed that having zero casualties could be variable.

*‘This is crazy.’*

I had never seen anything like this in any textbooks or adventure journals.

“Units line up! Units line up!” the soldier shouted.

“What…”

“Units line up! Get into position!” the soldier yelled.

“What do you think you’re doing…” I questioned.

“I just received an order from headquarters. We must get into position if we don’t want to die,” they replied.

“If they could give us a reason—”

“Damn it! I don’t know either!” the soldier shouted.

Everyone looked at me bitterly, but their faces changed soon.

"*Roooooooooooooar!*"

*Kabooooooooooooom!*

"*Roooooooooooooooooooar!*"

I was sure everyone knew that the roars were getting closer.

We moved to the specified location, and the ground beneath us started shaking violently. The roars were fast approaching, and the troops were becoming more and more nervous as time ticked by

My heart was racing as well—no, I felt numb all over.

We had yet to encounter the enemy, but the fear of dying enveloped me. We had to follow orders if we didn't want to die here. I was sure they understood that fact. I was sure there was a reason the headquarters gave us that order.

"What is… going on…" a soldier mumbled.

"Channel your spells!" I ordered.

The coordinates were already available to me. My hands were shaking, but I couldn't be so nervous here. I was sure the mistakes that our unit was going to make had already been included in the so-called variables.

*'It's okay to make mistakes.'* My hands that were typed in the coordinates in the communication channel were quivering. *'Stop being so nervous.'*

I was so nervous that I couldn't speak properly.

Just then.

"F-Fire!" I ordered.

As soon as the spells were unleashed…

*Kabooooooooooom!!!*

A colossal hand passed right in front of me.

It happened in the blink of an eye, and it felt like my time had slowed down.

The mages instinctively unleashed their spells, and the vanguards froze before the sudden attack. That wasn't all. The colossal hand crushed everything around it, but it wasn't really close to us.

It felt like the colossal hand was close enough to touch my hair, but it was actually far away.

In fact, it was so far away that not even the debris managed to touch us.

"*Roooooooooooooooar!!!*"

I finally saw the monster's colossal figure, and my legs grew weak at the sight of it. I collapsed to the ground, but my eyes were transfixed on it. I saw the spells landing on the monster's back. I wasn't sure whether it was effective or not, but I would say that it wasn't effective at all, as the monster didn't even glance at us.

The monster was looking up at the hole where it had come from, and we saw a figure dropping down the hole. She rushed at the monster and swung her spear. Layers of protective shields manifested on the monster's arm, and the monster swung it toward the spear-wielding figure as if it were annoyed by the latter.

The woman wielding a spear used one of the semi-transparent shields like a slide and slid down the monster's arm.

*BOOM!*

The monster broke the ceiling again and disappeared.

I heard noises from all over the place.

"Fire!"

“Hold up your shield! Hold up your shield!!! Hold up your shield! You bastards!”

*‘What the hell… is going on? What are we doing?’*

“Hold it for one second. One second! Just for one second!”

"*Roooooooooooooooar!*"

“Priest! I need a prieeest!”

“*AAAAAH!* Help me… Help me!”

“We’re leaving the wounded!” a soldier ordered.

“But…” I said.

“Damn it! It’s an order! We’re leaving the wounded and moving forward!” shouted the soldier.

“…”

“Move, you fools!”

"*ROAAAAR!!!*"

The monster broke a wall and left nothing behind. The only thing that remained in the ruins was a path that the remaining troops and I had to take for our next mission. I wasn’t sure what was going on, but I heard that monotone voice again.

— There are twenty seconds left before the start of the mission.

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1. Field Commander’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1002
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (9)

“We’re leaving the wounded!” the soldier shouted.

“But…”

“Damn it! This is an order! Leave the wounded and move!” he ordered.

“…”

“Move it, you fools!” he yelled.

The soldiers looked hesitant, and it was definitely not easy for them to leave just like that. I could see it from the way they were looking back. I[1] also couldn’t help but look back despite giving them the order to move.

It wasn’t easy to leave, as there were troops trapped under a pile of rubble, along with comrades rolling around while grabbing their faces and people groaning in pain upon getting crushed by the debris.

It was especially hard to leave them because we had been together for a long time.

However, I had to look away and ignore them.

*‘Because we’re soldiers… ’*

The troops of the Federation were devastated by the 27th Legion Summoning Incident. It happened quite a while ago, but the Federation had yet to recover from the damage they suffered at the time.

Even now, the Federation was still recovering, and the Federation had to give up on many things. Even if one were military personnel working for the

country, one wasn't excluded from the destitution that followed, so ex-soldiers naturally became mercenaries.

And as soldiers, we had to…

*'We have to follow orders.'*

Of course, that wasn't the *only* reason. We were hired mercenaries from the Federation, so we had to follow orders and complete our mission. There were many competent adventurers throughout the continent, and if we wanted to beat them at their own game, we had to ensure that our credibility as mercenaries wouldn't get tainted.

For the sake of every Federation mercenary across the continent, we had to look forward rather than look back.

"*Roooooooooooooooar!!!*"

*Kabooooooooom! Craaaaaaack!*

There were loud explosions everywhere, and I'd stop moving every time I heard a voice. Of course, it was only for a second—no, it wasn't even a second. More than half of the troops were swept away to attract the monster's attention.

"Hold up your shield! Move while holding up your shields!" I ordered.

"U-Understood, Captain Sophia!" the troops replied.

"Move faster instead of replying, you fools! Faster!" I shouted.

I was sure a fight broke out somewhere, but I wasn't sure whether it could even be called a fight.

As I ordered my troops to move while blocking the debris that was falling down on us using their shields, I couldn't help but keep thinking back to the scene I saw just now.

I saw the expedition members moving around, fighting Bahamut, a ruthless and terrifying monster.

*Boom! Kaboom!*

“Move! Faster! You bastards!” I shouted.

The puzzle pieces were falling naturally.

To be honest, I had no way of knowing what was going on, but it was an undeniable fact that all troops in the Underground Temple were involved.

It felt strange. It was like there were strings attached to us, and someone was controlling us. It was like we were moving according to a script that someone had written in advance—no, it was like everything was going as planned.

*‘This isn’t right.’*

“Captain Sophia! The road is blocked,” a soldier informed.

“Commander?” I asked.

“The route is the same, Captain Sophia! Keep moving forward,” he replied.

“We keep moving forward,” I ordered.

“What? But the path—”

“I can see it, too,” I interrupted them.

“I’m sorry,” a troop said.

I saw the broken bridge as well, and it was highly likely that parts of the Underground Temple had shattered due to the battle. Despite that, the route marked on the coordinates was telling us to cross that bridge.

I flinched, but there was no need for us to stop because I saw another unit

loading up a giant ballista.

“Fire! Fire!”

An arrow with a rope tied to it flew and pierced the wall on the opposite side.

I heard heavy arrows piercing into the walls as if they’d been waiting for us to arrive here.

*‘We can use those ropes to go across.’*

We weren't the only ones moving.

The other units and parties were crossing using the ropes that weren’t too far from us.

"*Roooooooooooar!"*

The loud noises sent a tremor across the building, and debris started falling again.

I saw some people flinching due to the large debris, but large barriers manifested and protected them. The others used the barriers above them to move as quickly as possible and head upstairs.

“Move fast! Faster!”

“Move it!” a soldier shouted.

“Move, move!” another yelled.

“Cast your spells! Adjust your coordinates!”

I heard voices everywhere.

“The target is approaching! The target is approaching! Move faster! We don’t have time! Time…”

*'What time?'*

I heard a voice when I was almost on the other side.

I instinctively looked back and saw a familiar figure.

*'Kim Ye-Ri?'*

It was Kim Ye-Ri, who was known as the Daughter of the Blue Guild.

Behind her, I saw a monster that looked like an enormous bull.

*Boom! Boom! Boom!*

"Move!!! Move!!!"

"Bahamut… will punish all of you!" the monster yelled.

*'Damn it.'*

Kim Ye-Ri, who was running at an incredible speed, headed toward the bridge while barely managing to dodge the monster's attacks. She was moving as if she were an acrobat, and then she landed steadily on a rope.

The enormous bull tried to catch her, but the Daughter of the Blue Guild was already on the other side of the rope, so the monster's actions were useless. She moved so fast that she even went past me.

And that was when the troops, who went upstairs with the barrier, fired spells at the monster…

Wait, they were also aiming for the floor where the monster was standing.

*Kabooooooooom!*

The enormous bull fell underground.

*'This isn't right.'*

“Mission complete. Let’s get moving.”

“Mission complete. Order acknowledged.”

“Let’s move.”

*‘This… This isn’t right.’*

“You’re here,” a man said.

“Yeah, Mister Ki-Mo,” Kim Ye-Ri replied.

A combat priest wearing a broken pair of glasses talked to Kim Ye-Ri, who was juggling her daggers.

“What’s our mission?” Kim Ye-Ri asked.

“Wait for five minutes,” Ahn Ki-Mo answered.

“Looks like I can take a break,” Kim Ye-Ri said.

“…”

“…”

“Hey, hang in there. Um…”

“I-It’s Sophia,” I told him.

“Hang in there, Sophia,” Ahn Ki-Mo said.

“Y-Yes, sir…”

*‘How can he be so calm?’*

It was strange to me that they could talk and laugh in a situation like this.

*‘Did this not affect them at all?’*

They were being chased by a bull-like boss monster just now, so I found it unrealistic to see the combat priest joking around and Kim Ye-Ri kicking his shin.

“We have to move, Captain Sophia.”

“*Ah*, I’m sorry, Commander,” I said.

I shook my head, realizing that I had been staring at the Daughter of the Blue Guild. Then, I started moving. I started having a headache as I walked, and it was intensifying as the seconds ticked by.

“You just need to be on standby after reaching your destination.”

“Yes, sir,” I said.

"*Roooooooooooar!*"

*Kabooooooooooooom!*

The loud noise that sounded like it was far away was getting closer to us.

*‘It’s coming back.’*

The Gray Warrior was leading the monster to us.

I heard magic spells being cast, screams, commands, and a variety of noises.

I was sure it wasn’t all that different from earlier. Just like the time just now when we had abandoned the wounded, the expedition members were probably fighting the monster right now.

The priests would move to support the Gray Warrior, and the mages would become his shield in a place where they couldn't be seen. The spears and siege weapons would keep attempting to pierce the monster’s outer shell.

Each unit and party member in the Underground Temple were here to

protect and support each other. Whether it was important or not, the missions assigned to each unit—no, the process of carrying out that mission involved every single individual.

*'This… really isn't right.'*

I was sure our mission was still the same as earlier. Our mission was probably to buy time so that the Gray Warrior could create enough space.

"We've reached our destination," said the field commander from the Sacred Democratic Country.

*Kabooooooooom!*

The monster of pure violence broke through the wall.

We saw Bahamut again.

The Gray Warrior immediately flew up, but the monster's attention was fixed on us.

*'It remembers.'*

The one second not too long ago. The one second that incapacitated half of the troops.

"*Woo…"*

The monster remembered that moment, and it raised its hand.

*'Do we run? No, it's too late.'*

We weren't ordered to run away.

"Shields… Put up your shields!"

I gritted my teeth, and the monster's colossal hand made a beeline for our unit. I was sure we'd get help. A mage, priest, or a named being with

transcendental power would definitely come and help us.

However, no one was looking at us.

*'Did we fail?'*

No, we didn't fail. Perhaps this was our final mission.

*'How much time did we buy him?'*

The Federation mercenaries managed to buy time for the entire expedition.

Our unit was not important at all, but we managed to grab the monster's attention.

In the end, we delayed the boss from chasing after the Gray Warrior. Just like the time when there were casualties but we managed to delay the monster by a second, they were going to use the Federation mercenaries to delay the monster by a few seconds.

It didn't seem like much, but it was a big achievement for us.

It was pretty common for an army to sacrifice its troops to gain the upper hand in the war.

"*Haa…"*

And that was when the ground beneath us trembled violently.

Before I could figure out what was going on, the ground collapsed.

The monster's colossal hand was still in the air while my troops and I felt weightless.

"What the! What the hell?!"

I saw Bahamut roaring and chasing after the Gray Warrior again. A levitation spell was cast on the entire unit. The troops, who thought they were going to

fall to their deaths, landed safely.

“There are ten seconds left before the start of the mission.”

“…”

“The mission is starting in ten seconds, Captain Sophia!”

The bull-like monster that had fallen from the bridge earlier was getting attacked by the expedition members. I also saw a face with a familiar mustache, and he was firing magic bullets through his finger.

“Colonel… Smith?” I said.

“It’s been a while, Captain Sophia,” he greeted.

*‘This… This isn’t right.’*

“Let’s catch up later. We were actually lacking vanguards… I never imagined you’d end up here,” Colonel Smith said.

“Are you the one who destroyed the ceiling?” I asked.

“I was simply following orders,” Colonel Smith answered.

“…”

*‘This doesn’t make any sense at all. T-t-this isn’t right. No matter how much I think about it, this is abnormal.'*

Goosebumps broke out all over me, and I couldn't describe the bizarre feeling that engulfed me along with fear.

I frowned because it felt like I was being controlled, but…

— The mission starts now

I unknowingly raised my shield.

1. Captain Sophia’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1003
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (10)

*"Mission success."*

*"It really is a success."*

*"The 42nd Unit's mission has been successful. There are no casualties, so that's good. It went a lot smoother than we thought."*

*"…"*

*"The 7th Unit has also completed their mission."*

*"…"*

*"Rafael has entered basement level six. I think he's deviating from the route, so please adjust."*

*"Okay, noona,"* I[1] said.

*"The same goes for you, Commander."*

*"I've already confirmed it."*

*"I've confirmed it as well, noona."*

*"Redeploy the unit."*

*"Recalculating route…"*

*"We need to treat the wounded in basement level four. I'm reminding you in case you forgot."*

*"Acknowledged."*

*"The success rate of the current mission is about ninety-eight percent. I'll send you the errors, so please send me a fix, and I'll send it to the field commanders right away. You have two minutes."*

*"I'm busy, noona,"* I replied.

*"I'll do it,"* Jin Cheong said.

*'Yeah, you should do it. You're the reason behind all this.'*

*"It was a mistake letting that incompetent fool take care of this mission. I'll find out exactly what went wrong. It'd be great if we could implement it in the following missions,"* Jin Cheong remarked.

*"What? That was your mistake. Stop the nonsense,"* I retorted.

*"How absurd. How could you say it's not your fault when you're the one who's controlling the field? I told you several times that this mission was important. If you paid that mission as much time and attention as you did on your* precious *Blue Guild, we wouldn't have to experience failure,"* Jin Cheong retorted.

*"Why are you suddenly bringing up the Blue Guild? Everything has to be set up before I can do anything. What's the point of planting high-quality seeds and using good fertilizer when the ground itself is rotten? The mission itself was bad from the start, man. Your plan was trash,"* I replied.

*"It's not even funny anymore. I'll explain it again one by one, but I wonder if you'd understand it with that brain of yours,"* Jin Cheong said.

*"Here we go again. You two, stop fighting,"* Lee Ji-Hye chimed in.

*"We're not fighting."*

*"We're not fighting."*

*"Ah! Stop fighting! Stop arguing! Is it really important to figure out whose fault it is? You two must have nothing to do. Are you so free that you can argue with each other right now?"* Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

*"I have work I need to do, but I can completely control the situation. Of course, our Commander Jin can't do that, so I'll be the bigger man and admit defeat. You're at your limit, right? I'm sure your puny brain is struggling to keep up. Is that you gritting your teeth?"* I asked.

*"That's so absurd that I don't even want to answer that, but I'll say just one thing—"*

*"Ah, just stop already!"*

*'Look at you, pretending to be calm.'*

I could see Jin Cheong doing some calculations while gnashing his teeth.

His eyes had long become bloodshot. How dare he act so relaxed when he was struggling to keep up?

*'I'm winning this one.'*

He couldn't see my situation here, but I could see him.

It was kind of childish, but this evil scum's situation was funny.

Honestly, he didn't have any luxury to talk or relax.

He was overdoing it, as he didn't want to lose face, but his efforts were gnawing away at his confidence. It seemed that he got himself just a little bit of free time, as he decided to argue with me to save his face.

I wiped away the blood dripping down my nose and nodded quietly.

*'He's annoying, but he's incompetent.'*

I truly didn't want to acknowledge it, but it was undeniable that he was actually doing this kind of work. He was like a chess piece that popped up when I needed it the most.

It was encouraging to know that there was always someone I could use at the right time and at the right place.

We prepared the overall plan together, but the chance that all of this would go according to plan was very slim. There'd always be variables regardless of our efforts, and mistakes could happen at any time.

The crux of the matter was our reaction time. We had to react as fast as possible to variables that would certainly appear, and the key to this mission was how quickly and reliably we could put the derailed train back on track.

*‘This is where talent comes in.’*

I had eyes, but Commander Jin was moving the troops using just his brains. In that sense, it was kind of surprising because the amount of data he could take in was limited, unlike me.

Moreover, he couldn’t look at the overall situation using a telescope. He could only assume the situation based on the field commanders’ reports and the blue dots on the screen.

*"Oppa, I’ve confirmed that Rafael has changed his route. We've updated the missions of each unit. Commander, please acknowledge."*

I saw the troops moving on the map. The troops, which were the blue dots, instantly changed directions while checking the missions assigned to them.

"Understood."

The blue dots spread out and grouped up repeatedly.

The troops naturally mixed together and divided while they were moving. It was different from Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung, whom we used during the

Republic War. There were always chess pieces available to use on the battlefield, but inside this Underground Temple, I had to prepare the chess pieces myself.

If I wanted to ensure that Rafael wouldn't lose in his game of tag with Bahamut, I had to keep finding the best and shortest routes as fast as possible. The reason there was so much back and forth was that I had to guide the troops to the shortest routes as well.

Variables would appear not just in battles but during the movement process as well. For example, Commander Jin's job for our overall plan was to play *Tetris* by joining the puzzle pieces and handing them over to me.

I had yet to receive a useless puzzle piece from him. It was like he had been giving me the long pieces, but the components I needed to make something useful out of it were always within my arm's reach.

Sometimes, he'd even send a blueprint to me, so it was hard to figure out the appropriate task for him. Actually, there wasn't a need to know that. I understood Ji-Hye noona, and Lee Ji-Hye understood Commander Jin.

The plan was changing nonstop, and it felt like a living organism as it moved in real time. I couldn't really explain it, but the system made it. Yes, the system made it. We didn't make it ourselves.

We were simply trying our best to use each other in the most efficient way, and the system somehow made a way for us to share data, plans, and tactics in the most efficient way. We also find out how to actually execute them.

The more we got used to the system, the more stable it became. The system was doing its own debugging. It was catching errors and addressing them, as well as resolving variables. It also gave us new ideas that we could explore. In other words, this program was making it easy for us to navigate this battlefield.

*'It's pretty convenient.'*

"*Roooooooooooar!*"

Rafael was being obstructed by many things, but we had many cards up our sleeves. A variable had also appeared, but we'd soon have a way to deal with it. The hole that appeared from out of nowhere had filled itself up.

The probability graph was moving on its own without my intervention. As the gears and cogs worked together, the parts were also moving in the vast Underground Temple.

The dots on the map were moving and interacting with each other.

They were all moving to complete their missions.

Of course, their destination was the same.

“Mission complete. Checking the next mission.”

“We’re merging the units.”

“We've completed our mission! Leader!”

“Commander! What should we do next…”

*Kabooooooom!*

"There are injured members, and we'll proceed with a rescue mission.”

“Move! Move!”

“The boss! We have encountered the boss!”

"*Roooooooooooar! Wah… Wooooooooooo!*"

The screen was changing. My hands and eyes moved nonstop so that I could give everyone their next mission. At the same time, I had to keep an eye on Rafael and focus on him so that I could grasp what he was doing.

— We've received a report from the Friendship Clan. Their members have thoroughly exhausted their mana, so they have been incapacitated.

*"The rearguards of Friendship or whatever are to move to the safe zone. They reached their limit faster than I thought."*

As the battle went on, more and more people were dropping out of exhaustion. There were mages who had used up all of their mana, priests with no more holy power, archers with no more arrows, and vanguards who could no longer move from fatigue.

I was anxious, but I wasn't worried at all.

*'It's a good thing.'*

This was all because it meant that they managed to exhaust themselves without dying. There was a certain amount of resources a person could utilize. If they had used their resources in the most efficient way, I ought to be happy about it.

Of course, it'd be nice if they used everything they had until the end, as the vanguards of the Friendship Clan looked like they still had some stamina left.

*"Colonel Smith?"*

— This is… Colonel Smith.

*"Twenty-three combat personnel will be heading down there. We'll be using the same method we used with Captain Sophia. You'll receive your order in one minute, and the mission will begin in about five minutes, so be on stand-by."*

— Understood, Father Lee Ki-Young. *Ugh*, my apologies. I'm currently in battle…

*"Once this is over, I want you to reconsider my offer of joining our Blue Guild."*

— That's…

*"This is the first time I asked someone to join us twice."*

—…

*"Why do you think it's my first time doing this? Was it because I didn't need to make another offer? Or was it because of my bad habit of destroying them if I can't have them?"*

—…

*"I trust you know what I'm trying to tell you."*

— Yes, sir.

The raid against Templar Extra was still ongoing, and it was about time I recycled the incapacitated units. I could see Colonial Smith, sporting a stylish mustache, firing magic bullets with a frown on his face.

However, I was sure he wanted to join the Blue Guild as well.

*"Report any variables immediately."*

—…

*"You have two hours to complete your mission."*

— I'll do… my best…

It was a good thing that the world had many competent people.

*BOOM!*

The battlefield was changing. Colonel Smith and a few troops continued the difficult fight, but Templar Extra's side wasn't the main dish. The main dish or stage had yet to be made.

*"A big chunk of the mages have exhausted their mana."*

*"I don’t think they manage to shatter even his outer shell."*

*"I sent the combat-related data, oppa. I've also analyzed his movement patterns. It may not be that helpful, though…”*

We'd buy time, gather data, and weaken his outer shell. Then, we'd gather even more data once the monster had his turn. The success rate of the mission that we were going to execute skyrocketed, and it was all thanks to the data that we had gathered.

At this rate, the expedition team would achieve their goal faster than expected.

*"Start the mission."*

*"Mission complete. We have completed our mission.*

*"Mission complete. Not bad."*

*"Mission details sent."*

*"Acknowledged. No edits necessary."*

The blue dots on the map moved to surround the monster, but it wasn’t a perfect circle. They were so far from the monster that it was embarrassing to say that they had it completely surrounded.

Some of the units couldn’t even see the monster due to the debris, while the others were on stand-by on a different floor.

However, this wasn't such a bad sight. It took the monster a ton of effort for him to reach the circle, so I was sure he wouldn’t use his turn so easily.

*‘We’re not the only ones exhausted.’*

Perhaps the monster was tired as well. I was talking about mentally, not physically. He was probably feeling useless emotions such as annoyance,

anxiety, anger, and nervousness. The monster was moving instinctively.

His movements were simple and easy to read, but he couldn't completely abandon his human side. There was a high chance that was the case, as he was really obsessed with a single item.

*'That's what's going to take your life.'*

The exhausted Rafael flew up.

*"Start the mission."*

Rafael let go of the shining feather.

"*Roooooooar!!!*"

Spells were fired from all directions, but one thing that was different from before was that they weren't aimed at the monster. They were aimed at the small feather that was falling helplessly from the sky.

"*Hahahahahahaha!*" I laughed.

— How cruel.

"*Hahahahahahahahahaha!*" I couldn't stop laughing.

—…

"It's easy to bring down anyone with a glaring weakness," I said.

The monster blocked every single spell using his enormous figure, and he did that to protect the tiny, shining feather. The monster desperately wanted to protect the angel's feather, and we could use that to push the monster into a corner.

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1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1004
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (11)

Bahamut, who was also known as Nauseating Bahamut, was a Mythic-rank monster at the very least. I had data on his movement patterns, attack patterns, physical abilities, physical features, special skills, and unique abilities.

However, no one could say for sure whether the data that I had collected was accurate. It could be said that the Bahamut who had been chasing after Rafael was not at his peak power. The fact that he was extremely careful not to damage the feather told me that he had skills that he dared not use during his chase against Rafael.

*'He definitely has a ranged skill.'*

Perhaps it was something similar to a dragon's breath, or perhaps he could fire a beam from his finger. He could also throw a rock at Rafael with great accuracy. Regardless of what it was, Bahamut definitely had a ranged attack.

In fact, a monster of Bahamut's caliber definitely had a ranged attack. It was unheard of for a monster as powerful as Bahamut to lack any ranged attacks, and I had personally never heard of a monster like that.

*'I'm sure pre-corruption Bahamut can cast spells.'*

He could definitely cast spells back then, but this issue was a no-brainer. I was sure he wouldn't stand by and watch the feather disappear with Rafael.

The nauseating demon's movements were being restricted by the feather, and it was also an amazing debuff. The majority of Bahamut's attacks were sealed—technically, he could use them, but he was scared of damaging the feather, so he opted not to use them.

All he could do was move around; he couldn't even cast his spell as if he was under a Silence spell. The feather was falling to the ground, and the enemies were sandwiching him, so what could Bahamut do in this situation?

There was only one thing he could do—curl up on the ground.

*'No wonder it looked so holy.'*

Who would have thought that a mere glowing feather would achieve that kind of effect?

The Angel of Sacrifice had to have foreseen that something like this would happen, so they left that feather behind. The feather had not only immobilized the vicious demon, but it had also revealed the demon's glaring weakness.

The monster used its colossal frame to withstand the expedition group's attacks, and it was full of openings. I was sure this sight was inspiring hope among the allies.

The holy light and the tiny miracle of the small feather raised the morale of the allies.

*'Can we really defeat that monster?'*

Could a mere human truly go up against such a monstrous demon?

They were not expressing it in words, but I was sure everyone was worried.

Despite the fact that the continent and mankind had overcome crisis after crisis, they still felt hopeless in the face of an unimaginably powerful enemy. They couldn't help but instinctively feel fear in the face of a terrifying, immortal monster.

The Angel of Sacrifice's feather had united those afraid, worried, and anxious.

It became a symbol and their source of strength.

It reminded us that we were strong.

“Chaaaaaaaaarge!”

“Fire! Fire!!! Use everything!”

From the ordinary adventurers…

“We have our mission!”

“His outer shell is really strong… so concentrate your attacks on one place.”

*“Start the mission.”*

To the heroes with their own goals…

*"For the Priest of Prophecy!"*

*"For the Priest of Prophecy!*

*"The time has come! The moment we’ve been waiting for is finally here."*

*"We’ll bring back the light! We’ll bring our light back! It’s the reward we’ve been waiting for an eternity!"*

From the holy spirits who had been waiting an eternity for the darkness to disappear to the troops who had gathered with their own goals but had the dignity, the honor, and the will to protect the continent… they had all been waiting for this moment.

*‘I wouldn’t call this a counterattack.’*

It was more like we were piecing together the puzzle pieces.

*‘Basically, we just need to exacerbate his wounds.’*

We had to attack the parts of his body that were oozing with a pitch-black fluid.

Those wounds weren't inflicted by us. He had harmed himself and had inflicted those injuries on himself over time. The key to this raid was cutting off his hands and feet, immobilizing him. The most effective way to do that was to attack his joints and major muscles.

*'Finishing blows won't be effective on him, anyway.'*

"*Roooooooooar!*"

*Kabooooooooooom!*

There was no need for us to make any adjustments, as he was making it easy for us to target him.

A massive column of light fell, and the giant spear that the spirits had manifested pierced the monster's back. He could have easily dodged it by moving away, but he couldn't do it.

He wasn't sure whether he could protect the feather by blocking all attacks from all directions, and it was all due to the fact that this was not his first rodeo.

He knew just how persistent and annoying humans could become.

*'What are you going do?'*

"Fire! Fire!"

*'Are you going to run?'*

He had no idea what to do.

*'Or will you fly up?'*

He had four eyes. Two were on the feather, and he used the other two to look around.

*'How about breaking through the encirclement? There are places you could easily break through. Yeah, over there. You should be able to get out of here if you move that way.'*

"*Wuaaah…"*

*Kabooooooooom!!!*

*Boom!*

*Rumble. Kabooooooooooom!*

"*Roaaaaaaaaaaar!*"

*'You don't think that will work? It looks like a trap, right?'*

I was sure it looked like a trap because it was indeed a trap.

It wasn't dangerous to him, but it was dangerous for the feather that he was desperately protecting. He had to move carefully—he had to move one step at a time. He wasn't courageous enough to take risks while protecting his most valuable treasure. He was trying to avoid even the tiniest risk. The only thing he could do was move his tail, but…

*'We've figured out the attack range of his tail.'*

The members near his tail stepped back while the others stepped forward. He had made a mistake with his turn, so his treasure was in danger.

And that was when I saw him inhaling the mana particles in the air.

*'Is he going to use Breath?'*

He couldn't do that. It was funny to see a beast like him attempting a bluff,

but we had the advantage here.

The vanguards had been deployed as well, so…

*‘Lift your head, and it’s over.’*

He definitely thought of humans as mere ants, but so what? What was he going to do if one of them jumped at him to snatch away or destroy his feather? I was sure Rafael was pretty annoying in his eyes as well.

He hadn't been able to catch Rafael because the latter had wings.

"*Wuuuh… Uhhh…”*

He couldn’t fire it.

*Kabooooooom!*

“Cast your spell!s”

*Kabooooooooooom!*

*"Hey, you."*

— Rank One Field Commander, Codename Genius, reporting.

*"Please set up camp at the designated coordinates."*

— Excuse me?

*"Set up camp at the designated coordinates and tell the mages and ranged classes to take a break. I’ll divide the mages into seven groups and manage them myself. Except for three groups, tell everyone else to take a break."*

— Yes… sir.

*"…”*

— D-Do you… really want me to do that?

*"You just need to follow my orders."*

I felt like I knew what Genius was worried about.

It truly didn't make sense to pull out the members and tell them to rest when they had painstakingly surrounded the monster.

Moreover, the enemy's power was beyond their imagination.

If Bahamut wanted to do so, he could easily break the encirclement.

However, Genius had reason to be scared.

*'He's nothing but a beast.'*

The rearguards cautiously took a few steps backward with doubtful faces.

*'Maybe I should drink some coffee.'*

Obviously, the encirclement weakened instantly. The number of magic spells and arrows had decreased significantly as well. They were attacking from time to time, but there was a clear difference when it came to the firepower.

Despite that, the monster remained unmoving.

The monster was still curled up. He was examining the battlefield while catching his breath, but in the end, he chose to do nothing.

*"He's scared,"* Jin Cheong remarked.

*"Is that what he looks like to you, Commander?"* I asked.

It was true that the monster was scared.

He was scared because he had no way of checking what we were about to do, why we had pulled out some of our troops, and why the attacks had

decreased in number and intensity.

No, even if he had a way to know what we were trying to do here, he would still hesitate.

After all, he had already lost the feather earlier.

*"…"*

*"Looks like you've been overdoing it. Do you want to take a break?"* I asked.

*"Don't make me laugh. It's you who should be taking a break,"* Jin Cheong replied.

*"Ah, thanks. Then I'll go enjoy a cup of coffee. I'll leave this place to you, then,"* I replied.

*"It looks like it's going to take a while, so I'll take a break as well, Commander Jin. Oppa, should we make them change shifts every four hours?"* Lee Ji-Hye asked.

*"That should be fine,"* I replied.

*"In case you're not aware, let me remind you that this is going to be a long, drawn-out battle. That monster's recovery rate is astounding as well," Jin Cheong remarked.*

*"I think it's best to keep attacking to ensure that it wouldn't fully recover. Ha-Yan will recover soon, so until then… I think it's best if we use siege weapons,"* I suggested.

The beast obsessed with the Angel of Sacrifice's feather probably thought that everything was a trap. The beast probably believed that he was in a field of mines. He was afraid of taking even just a single step, as there was a possibility that the ground beneath him could explode.

Of course, we were just bluffing here, but the monster couldn't make his

move so easily.

“Hee-Ra noona, do you want a cup of coffee?” I offered.

“Are you feeling better, darling?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“Thanks to you,” I replied.

After acting cute, I took a sip of my coffee and kept an eye on the monster.

I told Commander Jin that I was going to take a break, but I couldn’t trust Commander Jin to run this entire thing by himself.

A ballista with massive chains attached to it pierced the monster’s body.

"*Roooooar!*"

The magic engineers immediately began working on the chains.

I was sure that mere chains weren't enough to hold the beast down, but it would limit its movements. The monster had just been skewered and tied down by chains, but it showed no reaction whatsoever.

And that was when I heard rumbling noises…

*‘Huh?’*

There was a loud crack, and the ground beneath the curled-up monster cracked open into a spider web-like pattern.

*‘That can’t be.’*

There was no way he would take that risk.

There was no chance of him escaping underground, and there was no way that the ground beneath him could shatter through his power alone.

*‘I've calculated it.’*

I had already calculated how much force and weight the ground beneath Bahamut could withstand, and I was extremely thorough with his plan, so there was no way I was mistaken.

*"Stop attacking! Stop attacking!"*

I heard Commander Jin's urgent voice, but arrows were already in mid-air.

Bahamut wasn't doing anything, but the ground beneath him cracked open, and he fell down. I was busy looking for the feather, and I was sure the monster was doing the same.

And then, among the falling debris, *we* saw the feather…

"…!!!" The monster let out an indescribable cry. It caught me off-guard, but I quickly came up with my next course of action, as I had contingency plans in case the situation went awry.

The monster walked away slowly, and he was no longer under my control. Before realizing it, he started running until he was panting, and the tears he had been holding back were flowing down his cheeks.

Why was he crying?

"Baha… mut…! Bahamut!"

Was he crying because of his injured friend? Was he crying because even though he was a hero, he ended up getting corrupted and had been spending time as long as eternity inside that deformed body? Or was he crying because he was an idiot who hadn't done anything other than stare at the Angel of Sacrifice's feather?

"Bahamut! Bahamut!"

I was reminded of that brief interaction in the Underground Temple, and it had been such a long time that it had become a faint memory lingering in the minds of the Angel of Sacrifice and the hero of the distant past.

Who would have thought that those two would reunite after so many years?

It was a long-awaited reunion—a beautiful summer reunion.

# CHAPTER 1005
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (12)

*'Ah. That was a midsummer night's dream… '*

It was a short but intense story.

It was an impactful and beautiful tale of the bond between the Angel of Sacrifice and the twisted hero.

I was sure some would never forget this story.

The story was about the memories they shared together.

It was a short time for the Angel of Sacrifice, who had been asleep for tens of thousands of years, but it had to have been an eternity of waiting for the corrupted hero.

The hero tried to hide his wounds, but the Angel of Sacrifice showed all of his wounds.

They were on opposite sides when they first met.

Although they thought that they would never understand each other… like all stories, they ended up forming a bond, and they eventually understood each other's pain.

"Bahamut…"

*'There's a reason behind his obsession with that feather.'*

The length of their bond did not define its depth.

It was just like a midsummer night's dream.

The memories were so faint that it seemed like one would forget them by blinking one's eyes. It was a really short time, but it was an unforgettable time.

They enjoyed talking to each other, and they walked while listening to the cicadas crying underground. They had deep conversations and shared drinks under the night sky, enjoying each other's company.

*'Do you remember?'*

The grueling sword training, their first meeting at the social gathering, and the precious memory they secretly made on the terrace.

*'Also… '*

Their final moments together resulted in a lot of regret.

There were so many things I wanted to tell him.

I wanted to tell him that it wasn't his fault and that it was a simple accident.

I wanted to tell him it was all over and that… he could finally rest.

There were regrets when we parted, so our short meeting was meaningful and impactful.

If I had no regrets, we wouldn't have been in this situation.

*'I thought I was the only one who remembered it.'*

That was the setting…

He also didn't think that I'd remember our short moment together.

Who could have thought that he'd rely on a small feather, hurt himself, and transform into a beast?

I felt so guilty at the fact that I hadn't realized it until now… this beast was

Bahamut. I had just realized that fact, and the immense guilt was weighing down on my shoulders.

He looked like a hideous monster, but I could see Bahamut sleeping quietly inside the monster. He looked like there were many things he wanted to tell me. He looked like he wanted to apologize to me.

There was only one person who could reach their hand out to him when no one else wanted to do so. It would be the Angel of Sacrifice, who had been asleep for tens and thousands of years.

I had to tell him before it was too late.

I need to tell him with this sincere voice of mine…

Before I could tell him, I had to talk to someone else first.

*'You bastard. You're such a troll.'*

While I was trying my best to catch my breath, I hopped onto our channel and said, *"You really did it."*

*"Damn it…"* Jin Cheong muttered.

*"Hey, Commander Jin. I didn't think you would cause trouble in such a short amount of time."*

*"It's not my fault."*

*"If the person responsible says that it's not his fault, will that make everything okay? You should've approached this with the mindset of taking responsibility for it.*

*"And the only thing that you can say is that this isn't your fault? Must be really easy for you to say that. No matter what happened and the reason behind it, the person in charge should take responsibility for any errors or mistakes in the mission."*

*"That's not what I meant. You know that as well. There were no variables in the mission. We checked… hundreds of times… about how much force and weight the ground could handle…"*

*"Then that means you created the variable, damn it. If there were no variables in the mission, then where did that variable come from? What do you think is the answer? The answer is it came from the person in charge! Am I wrong? Am I?"* I asked.

*"You're not wrong, oppa,"* Lee Ji-Hye chimed in.

*"…"*

*"See? Even Ji-Hye noona agrees with me."*

*"Actually, it might not be Commander Jin's fault, either."*

*"Wait, Ji-Hye noona. Protect him right now—"*

*"You're involved in this mission, too, so don't say that," Lee Ji-Hye interrupted me.*

*"She's right."*

*"Our Commander Jin is experienced and competent. He's also old enough to do things on his own. Even if an unthinkable variable has come up, I don't think it's a good idea for you to say that this is not your fault when you're the person in charge of this.*

*"I understand where you're coming from, but this is not like you, Commander Jin," I remarked.*

*"Damn it…"*

*"This is why I can't look away even for a second. This happened because we let you take charge for a moment. Commander Jin, is the raid a joke to you? Is clearing a dungeon a game to you?*

*"If you want to play games, then go to the casino and play your board games. Or go to that black market and start a duel with the people there… Why are you trying to play games here and mess things up for us?"*

*"…"*

*"I knew this was going to happen. I just* knew *this was going to happen. Get ahold of yourself, Commander. Do you really think that staying quiet will make this go away?*

*"It doesn't matter whether you make an excuse or apologize; you have to take responsibility for your mistakes.*

*"If you weren't confident to take on the task by yourself, you should've asked for help or told us that you were tired. You let your pride take over and look at what happened. My god."*

"…"

*"You—"* I started.

*"I apologize. It's… my fault,"* Jin Cheong said.

"…"

*"I'll make sure to take responsibility and… make up for what I caused earlier."*

*"This is why you should have been more mindful. Anyway, make sure Kim Hyun-Sung won't get here. Make him wander around; make him think like he's carrying out an important mission,"* I said.

*Click.*

*"Oppa, Commander Jin must be mad. He just hung up."*

*'No, I don't think he's mad. I'm looking at him right now, and wait… he just threw his chair away."*

*"Noona, I want you to take care of reorganizing the troops."*

*"Got it. I was going to rest a bit, but it looks like I won't be able to. If it gets too dangerous, you should back out as well."*

*"I have Hee-Ra noona, so it'll be fine."*

*"That does make me feel relieved."*

Hee-Ra noona looked surprised, but she just went with the flow.

Actually, she seemed happy about being able to confront Bahamut in person.

She wouldn't be able to go in and fight him, as I'd be there with her, but she'd be happy knowing that there was a possibility that she could fight such a terrifying, towering monster.

"Darling, should I carry you?" Cha Hee-Ra offered.

I shook my head. I had to run to make it more meaningful.

It was just a simple jog, but there were a ton of emotions mixed into it.

I was reminiscing about those distant days while jogging toward him.

The summer emotions that had taken my breath away; the time when I could cry without any reservations. I shed tears as I recalled the memories I had been cherishing in my heart for tens and thousands of years.

"*Roooooooooooooooooar!*"

Bahamut roared, and he'd soon go berserk because he had lost his precious feather. My voice couldn't reach him. I was too far from him. It was unrealistic of me to think that he'd hear me, but I called out his name again.

"Baha… *Bahamut!!!*"

He couldn't hear me, but I did not stop yelling out his name.

*'Your name is… '*

“Bahamut!”

*‘Shit. Can you really not hear me?’*

Was he going berserk?

Bahamut's eyes turned red, and large horns shot out from his injured back.

He roared, and everything around him exploded.

His mouth unleashed a dirty and nauseating—no, a trickle of saliva that seemed to represent his wounded soul.

Anyone could tell that he was not in his right mind. He was angry that his treasure had disappeared, and everyone could see how he was going to vent his anger.

He turned his and—

“Bahamut!” I shouted, even though he probably couldn’t hear me.

"*Wuah…”*

The wounded monster stopped looking around.

“Bahamut!” I shouted again.

The beast that looked like it was going to destroy everything looked around quietly. Had he remembered the memories we shared? Had the Angel of Sacrifice's voice reached the man who had been sucked into the pitch-black void?

Wings burst out of my back, and my golden eye looked up at the wounded beast.

“It’s dangerous, Father!”

“Damn it… Stand-by! Don’t get close to him. It’s an order!” I instructed.

*‘You remember me, right?’*

I still looked the same as I did tens of thousands of years ago. The Angel of Sacrifice hadn't lost his light as well, and I looked the same as what I probably looked like in our memories on that summer day.

I took a deep breath. I thought I no longer had any tears to shed, but tears rolled down my face.

I was being too emotional, and I couldn’t calm down at all.

*"Woo… Uhh…”*

The monster looked down at my shining wings. He flinched for a moment, but…

“Bahamut. *Heuk…* Bahamut…”

He could still remember my voice.

*‘Please remember our memories.’*

“Come back,” I said.

*‘Please come back.’*

“Don’t lose to the demon’s seed,” I added.

*‘You’re not the type to lose. You’re the type to overcome everything.’*

"*Roooooooooooar!*"

“*Heuk…* Please come back! Bahamut!” I shouted.

He looked hideous, but he was in pain.

There was a nauseating stench coming from him, but it wasn't dirty at all.

The monster before me resisted and fought back against the demon's power, reminding me of that hero on a summer day.

Who would point their finger at a man like him?

Who would look at him and say that he was dirty?

"*Wuah…"*

"I'm sorry… for making you wait for so long, Bahamut," I said.

"*Roooooooooooooar!*"

He stretched his hand out toward me.

I wasn't sure whether he was trying to squash the bug that was giving him a headache or he was welcoming the Angel of Sacrifice, but I closed my eyes.

*'All right. If that's my destiny, I'll accept it. If my death can free him from his pain, I'll accept that suffering.'*

*'Shit. He's not actually going to kill me, right?'*

*Craaaaaaack!*

*'Kim Hyun-Sung?'*

It wasn't him.

I gulped out of nervousness at the thought that Kim Hyun-Sung was here, but…

"I'm sorry for being late, Father."

I saw a giant wolf standing on its two feet, and it was stretching its remaining paws toward Bahamut.

“Templar… Gen? No—”

*‘Did you… turn… to the dark side as well?’*

“Templar Genny?” I said.

*Kabooooooooom!*

*'How did you become so strong?'*

*Craaaaaaack!*

*'What happened to you?'*

“I can still remember everything, Father,” he said.

I had no idea what was going on, but…

“Templar Genny! Watch out!”

I decided to cheer him on for now, as it was the only way to stop the Nauseating Bahamut.

“We need to purify that demon!” I shouted.

# CHAPTER 1006
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (13)

*'Oh yeah, I forgot you were here. Our reliable and loyal Templar Gen.'*

I had forgotten him until now.

*'Tens and thousands of years ago and even at this moment… '*

When I was the Priest of Prophecy and the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country, he was the knight of friendship who always tried to protect me.

He was a true friend who followed me and abandoned everything he had.

Just like a priest showing blind faith in their god, he believed in me blindly.

He lived for the honorary cardinal and the Priest of Prophecy. He turned his back on everything for me.

Obviously, I didn't like the pig porridge and the moldy room, and I wouldn't be able to say anything if he were to cut ties with me. After all, I scolded and yelled at him many times.

Despite that, he helped me in his own way, so there was no way I would be able to forget about him. Our time and memories as friends were already engraved in my soul.

*'I wasn't the only one who hadn't forgotten it.'*

I was sure he could still remember me. He was also forging his own path while waiting for me with Father Draktaris. I was sure he had realized that it was the wrong path, though, as he had obviously made a contract with the demon.

When the dirty and nauseating Bahamut accepted the demon's seed for his sinister plan, it was highly likely that Templar Genny was there as well.

Just like how Templar Simon had transformed into a spider and Templar Extra transformed into a bull, I was sure he had also offered his body to a demon.

Of course, Templar Gen looked different from the others.

He looked markedly different from the three.

There was light inside him, and that light existed to protect the Angel of Sacrifice.

Despite knowing that the demon would gnaw away at him, Templar Genny still accepted that power and there was only one reason behind that decision.

He wanted to have the power to fight Templar Bahamut—the true evil.

His back looked pitiful in my eyes, and I knew that I was not imagining things.

"I'm sorry, Father. I mean… Priest of Prophecy," Genny said.

"Templar Genny…" I mumbled.

"I'm really sorry… for greeting you in this form," Genny added.

"It's not your fault, Templar Genny. That… Your appearance—"

"I'm really sorry… for forgetting about you until now," Genny interrupted me.

*'Ah, is that what happened? That's actually better for me.'*

"But you remember me… now, Templar—" I pointed out.

"I couldn't recognize you, even though you were just next to me. I… apologize

for that," Genny interrupted me again.

"Gen…"

"I'm really sorry… for not listening to your voice… when you were asking for help," Genny added.

*'So that's how the story goes.'*

"It's fine, Templar Gen. You don't have to—"

"I'm really sorry," Templar Gen interrupted me once more.

I was sure he wanted to apologize, as I was always around him, but he hadn't noticed my cry for help.

Surprisingly, this was not part of my plan.

*'It makes it seem like I planned this out.'*

He reached that conclusion himself. He thought that I simply decided not to talk about what happened in my past life because I didn't want to hurt him.

He was telling himself that I was trying to protect him.

I was sure he was really embarrassed, and I couldn't imagine just how frustrated he was feeling.

Tens and thousands of years ago, he was weak, so I decided to keep the painful secret to myself in order to protect him. Even now, however, he was still too incompetent to do anything and could only watch from the sidelines until now.

"I'm sorry… about everything," Templar Genny repeated.

"You don't have to apologize, Templar Genny. You're here now, aren't you?" I told him.

It was his turn to protect the Angel of Sacrifice, the Priest of Prophecy, the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country, and the God of Sacrifice and Revival.

*'Now it's your turn to protect me, isn't it?'*

"It's my turn… to protect everything I have," Gen mumbled with a sorrowful expression.

*'This boy is pretty strong. He has also reached a whole new level.'*

His form and mana showed me that his evolution stemmed from darkness.

He had a clean and neat form, unlike Templar Spider, Templar Extra, and Bahamut's grotesque appearances. However, he didn't look pretty.

He looked kind of cool because he was a wolf, but his appearance made it obvious that he was a beastly wolf. Instead of radiant holy power, he was wielding a nauseating mana, and his blood was black instead of red.

The only difference I found was that…

*'He hasn't lost his mind.'*

He could think properly.

It was something that even Doom Doom Hyun-Sung couldn't achieve.

Doom Doom Hyun-Sung's face was hideous, and he'd lose his mind, but when he was sober in his Doom Hyun-Sung form. Templar Genny was like that. He did not look like he had lost his mind, even though he was in his demon form.

*'Maybe that's why he was a bit stronger.'*

I had no idea what exactly had happened or what he had gone through when he turned into a demon, but I had to give him credit for being able to control that power rationally.

He was basically wielding a weapon that could not be controlled.

Templar Gen's faith in the God of Sacrifice and Revival and his faith in that light was what created this situation. There was probably some mental growth as well, and he had to have awakened while recovering his memories as Templar Genny, which led to the current situation.

*'Our Genny is reliable.'*

Obviously, I had to sympathize with his desperation and growth.

"Templar Gen," I said.

I sympathize with the fact that he had no choice but to accept the darkness despite living with the light.

"*Heuk… heuuuk…"* I cried.

I was proud of him for growing stronger while overcoming tremendous mental pain and betrayal.

"Gen, it's dangerous!" I shouted.

I was crying because he was brave enough to show his hideous side to me.

"I-I'll provide support!" I offered.

The battlefield returned to its state earlier.

Commander Jin seemed a bit startled by the fact that a monster capable of grabbing Bahamut's attention had appeared, but he wasn't incompetent enough to just stand by and watch.

There were many ways to support Templar Gen against Templar Bahamut.

The monster in the shape of a wolf cast spells, swiped its claws, and moved fast around Templar Bahamut to grab the latter's attention. The way he used

his claws made me think like he was them as if they were a sword.

*'The biggest issue is that I can't support him with holy power.'*

"*Roooooooooooooooar!*"

Bahamut was also confused by the appearance of an unexpected enemy.

When the two monsters clashed, a powerful shockwave erupted. The wolf instantly realized that he could not beat Bahamut in a contest of strength, so he stepped back.

However, the nauseating fool seemed to be quick-witted, which proved to me that he had yet to lose his mind completely.

And that was when a cloud of mist engulfed the battlefield…

*'Mist Summoner Cheon Kwan-Wi.'*

Now that I thought about it, where had he been?

"Hee-Ra noona," I said.

*'Ah, she already left.'*

There were two soldiers next to the Red Mercenary, so she had to have decided to leave this up to me. It had been quite a while since I saw her Goddess of War transformation, and it was as amazing as the first time I saw it.

*BOOM!*

Nauseating Bahamut and the Red Goddess of War punched each other. Bahamut flew into a wall with a thunderous boom. A massive clump of mana struck Bahamut's head, and a deafening explosion reverberated.

*'It's Ha-Yan.'*

The giant wolf bit Bahamut's neck, but Bahamut swung his hand, sending the wolf flying into a wall.

Another thunderous explosion echoed, and it was so loud I felt like my eardrums were going to burst. Draktaris and his spirits unleashed a wave of holy light, and Bahamut roared in response.

His roar was strong enough to resist the wave of holy power.

The area ahead of us was slowly but surely transforming into ruins amidst this extraordinary battle.

"C-C-Can we really that this is… our battle?" one of the spectators mumbled.

It was like watching humans fight from an ant's point of view.

Whenever Bahamut swung his arm, the terrain would change. The same thing happened every time the mages cast their spells and whenever the wolf made his move. A battle between top-tier adventurers seemed like child's play compared to this, and I felt like no one had any business staying here except for transcendents.

To ensure minimal damage, the expedition members retreated frantically. They had no choice but to retreat, as they were useless here.

"*Dieeeeeeeeeee! Die!!! Die!!!* You disgusting monster! D-D-Die!" Jung Ha-Yan screamed. Her mana seemed bottomless, and it was all thanks to her Heart of Magic. A myriad of spears made out of mana pelted down on Bahamut.

Bahamut took out the spears sticking out of him before charging at the Red Goddess of War.

"*Hahahahaha!*"

*"Roaaaaaaaar! Roooooooooooar!*"

Bahamut opened his mouth, and a pitch-black mana converged before his

mouth.

“Hee-Ra noona! Breath! Breath!” I shouted.

Templar Gen kicked Bahamut's head, forcing him to look away.

*Swoosh!*

*BOOM!*

The pitch-black Breath missed the Red Goddess of War, but the floor beneath them collapsed upon getting hit by the pitch-black Breath. The transcendents fell down, and I instantly felt weightless.

Someone had cast flight magic and protection-type spells on me, and I was sure these spells were from Ha-Yan.

The problem was that there was another raid beneath us.

The order to retreat was given immediately, allowing Colonel Smith and the others to hide, but it wasn’t the case for the bull. Templar Bahamut grabbed the monster and tore it apart before drinking its pitch-black blood.

“You disgusting bastard,” I mumbled.

Bahamut was still pursuing that disgusting power even if it meant drinking the blood of his subordinate. A large horn burst out of him, and two giant arms shot out from his back.

“Bahamut… will…”

The bull's head muttered as it rolled on the ground.

"*Roooooooooooooar!!!*"

Bahamut swung his fist, and the Red Goddess of War was blasted away.

The mana he had unleashed created holes in the wolf’s body, while Jung Ha-

Yan unleashed her spells on Bahamut, but it was too weak to penetrate the latter's tough outer shell.

The monster roared, and the Underground Temple collapsed.

It wasn't a strange sight, as this was a battlefield of transcendent beings.

Despite that, I was taken aback by Bahamut's strength.

“Bahamut! Bahamut! *Heuk*! Please… Please break free from the demon. You have to overcome it!” I shouted. I had to attack him mentally. “Overcome it! Don’t lose! You have to find your true self!”

Jung Ha-Yan knocked on the circular barrier that she cast on me.

I probably looked like I was trapped inside it.

Before anything could happen, I saw a distant sunset.

*An illustration of Lee Ki-Yeon is included on the next page.

wooden spoon: It’s an illustration of Lee Ki-Yeon in a wedding dress!

# CHAPTER 1007
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (14)

It started out as a faint light, but it was getting brighter and brighter. I saw minute gradations as time went on, and an orange light eventually appeared, illuminating everything, driving away even the mist.

It was really beautiful.

Perhaps I found it even more beautiful, as I was in a place surrounded by nothing but rocks. I couldn't even see the sky, but I unconsciously looked up, hoping that I could see a glimpse of the sky. I could feel the breeze even though I knew that it was impossible.

The sight was so absurd that I thought I was teleported away somewhere.

The light from afar reached me in an instant. It was like special effects one would see at the appearance of an important character. I wondered how Bahamut would react to this sight. I turned my head slightly and felt something wrap their arms around me.

*'When did you get here?'*

I knew I wasn't keeping an eye out for him, but I couldn't even feel his presence until he was right behind me. It was like he was there right from the very beginning. He picked up as if he had done it many times before. Now that I thought about it; this was the first time we had met since I went back in time.

Back then, he was a crybaby and begged me not to go sacrifice myself.

However, he no longer looked like a crybaby.

*'So you're back now, huh? And you have no reason to go back to the past,*

*right?'*

Kim Hyun-Sung was angry.

No, it was more like he was trying to suppress his anger. He looked like he wanted to say something right now, but he couldn't say it. Obviously, the naive Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't be able to say anything to his friend, who looked like a mess.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung…"

I mumbled his name, and he instantly looked calmer. Orange horns had already appeared on his head, and orange wings had already sprouted from his back.

He had an idea as to what happened here, so he decided to enter combat mode before making his entrance, but he looked like he wasn't going to fight right now. He obviously thought about taking care of me first.

"Why? Why… did you do something so reckless?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

There was a lot to unpack from that question.

It sounded like he was blaming me, but he didn't sound angry.

*'It was to protect you, man.'*

"I… I wanted to carry your burden…" I answered.

It was a famous line, but it was true. I did all this to lighten his burden, and I only made this decision, as I knew how pressured he was feeling.

I did it so that Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't cry again.

I did it so that he wouldn't feel the need to take responsibility ever again.

Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips. It was time for him to get angry.

At this point, Kim Hyun-Sung would usually get angry, but he wasn't *that* heartless to yell at the wounded saint.

Lee Ki-Young of the past was covered in blood, and the present Lee Ki-Young was also in bad shape. However, his trembling hands and heavy breathing told me that he was truly furious.

*'I'm kind of scared.'*

I was scared because he was really mad. It was scary seeing him get up slowly without saying anything. His killing intent seemed to manifest, distorting the space around him.

Right now, I was sure he looked like that orange demon in Bahamut's eyes.

*'Damn it, damn it, damn it!'*

"*Roooooooooooooooooooooar!*"

*'Damn it, damn it.'*

The nauseating monster roared after making eye contact with Kim Hyun-Sung. I wasn't sure whether he was scared or expressing his anger. He looked too alien to apply the idiom—"all bark and no bite."

"*Roooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooar!*"

*'Stop it. Stop roaring.'*

*'Can you stop him from barking? Please?'*

Bahamut's eyes seemed to become even redder than red, and his fleshly body had grown a bit larger as well. It hadn't been that long since he entered his second phase, but it seemed like he was entering his third phase earlier than expected.

*'This is why I didn't want to call Kim Hyun-Sung over here.'*

There were hideous veins all over him, and his muscles, which looked like they were going to explode, grew even bigger. His body seemed to represent overwhelming violence, and his arms were as big as pillars.

His horn was still growing, and to make things worse, a colossal pair of wings burst out of his back. Actually, I wasn't sure if those were wings, as they looked like they were made out of flesh and blood.

*'He's staring at the individual who traumatized him, so of course, he's going to go crazy.'*

Anyone could tell that he had fallen into madness.

*'I know this is going to happen as soon as he sees Kim Hyun-Sung… '*

Bahamut opened his mouth and unleashed a beam of pitch-black mana.

*BOOM!*

The beam of pitch-black mana split the ground and pierced the wall and ceiling before devouring everything. The wall of the dungeon melted away, leaving nothing behind. I was sure it even affected the outside world.

Kim Hyun-Sung managed to dodge it, but the others couldn't dodge it.

After all, it happened without any warning.

Cha Hee-Ra's Red Goddess of War transformation was blown away, and she was left with only half of her figure. She tried her best to restore her transformation, but it was not that easy.

I was sure she'd struggle to fight Bahamut from now on.

Templar Gen was hit as well, as I could not see him anymore.

Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan had prioritized protecting herself.

The monster stomped and swung his arms wildly to defend himself against Kim Hyun-Sung's sword.

*‘How is he so fast?’*

I was sure that ordinary people couldn’t see him anymore, as even I could only see his afterimages.

*‘Hyun-Sung’s reaction speed is quick as well… ’*

My eyes lit up just then.

I'd be able to look at the battle from Kim Hyun-Sung's point of view using the Mythic-rank Regressor Instruction Manual activates, but…

*"Mr. Hyun-Sung?"*

—…

*"Mr. Hyun-Sung! Right now, we should…”*

—…

He wasn’t answering.

*‘What the hell?’*

Did he block me? Why?

“Mr. Hyun-Sung!” I shouted.

Why was he ignoring me?

*'You think you can beat him by yourself? Are you upset because of what I said about how I wanted to carry your burdens? Are you trying to show me that you can overcome this by yourself?'*

That was the only explanation I could think of at the moment.

However, it was understandable, as this issue was important to Kim Hyun-Sung.

Nauseating Bahamut swung his large arms, and the Sunset Swordsman swung his sword. The world amidst the orange and black hues was devastated. As always, the orange hue disappeared first.

The Red Goddess of War emerged from the dust and drove her large axe into the monster's shoulder, but Bahamut shrugged it off and rammed the Red Goddess of War.

The Red Goddess of War flew into a wall, and the Sunset Swordsman appeared to replace her as if she had just switched characters.

However, even the Sunset Swordsman found the monster's outer shell to be quite tough. The monster's pitch-black blood was pushing out the orange light—no, the pitch-black blood seemed to be devouring the orange light.

I was sure that it was all because of the orange demon hiding within the demon's seed inside Bahamut. I wouldn't be surprised if he had prepared a few things to deal with Kim Hyun-Sung.

Bahamut's body itself was devouring the orange light.

*'There's also the difference in weight class.'*

Bahamut's Strength was overwhelmingly high, and Kim Hyun-Sung found his size to be quite problematic.

"*Roaaaaaaaaaaaaar!*"

*BOOM!!*

"Damn it."

*'Why does he get upset at the critical juncture? Why is he being so stubborn when he's getting beaten up?'*

I was sure that my words were shocking, and as I said earlier, Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction was understandable, especially when his incompetence had forced me to make quite a few strange decisions.

He probably felt like he had caused trouble again, and he wanted to prove to me that he was not incompetent. I was sure he wanted to show me that he had changed to ensure that this incident would not happen again.

"*Ahhhhhhh!!!*"

"*Roooooooar!!!*"

*'How exhausting.'*

Bahamut was stronger than Kim Hyun-Sung… at the moment.

*'I can't let it continue like this.'*

Cha Hee-Ra lay in a pool of her own blood, but she was smiling for some reason.

Jung Ha-Yan randomly cast spells while vomiting.

The Sunset Swordsman was swinging his sword while gritting his teeth, but the undutiful Child of Sunset couldn't land his attacks and was actually getting pushed back.

*'Not like this.'*

I had done many things to prevent this ending.

We had an advantage, as I managed to bring Draktaris to our side.

However, we were on track to a bad ending.

I was caught off guard by Bahamut's decision to make the demon's seed bloom, but if one looked at it from a different point of view, the demon seed

was considered a nerf on Bahamut.

The social gathering ended up in a failure, but I managed to avoid the ending where I would lose my head.

*‘But I also don’t want a bloody ending, damn it!’*

*"Bahamut… Bahamut… Heuk… Bahamut!"*

*‘Now, I can't even attack him mentally. He must have truly gone crazy.’*

I felt ashamed for even attempting to rely on the nauseating beast.

*'At this rate, our Hyun-Sung will die.’*

“Stop it! Bahamut!” I shouted.

*'My baby is dying, damn it.'*

My delicate figure rushed forward amidst the explosions.

Bahamut lifted his claw and was about to tear Kim Hyun-Sung to shreds when the saint addicted to sacrifices made his appearance. Bahamut’s eyes widened. It was only for a moment, but his red eyes seemed to have returned to their original color.

“Mr… Ki-Young…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

“Mr. Ki-Young!!!” Kim Hyun-Sung screamed urgently.

However, I did not answer him, as I needed to focus on Templar Gen, the Knight of Friendship.

Templar Gen was standing before me, and he had blocked the monster’s claw for me.

“Templar Gen…” I said.

I was covered in Templar Gen's black blood.

*'I knew he was going to take the hit for me.'*

"I'm… sorry… for not protecting you… until the end…" Genny muttered quietly.

Bahamut's claw was sticking out of the wolf. Genny was panting, and he was dying because more than half of his figure was now riddled with holes. He fought for me until the very end. He was worthy of the title "Knight of Friendship." He was indeed an honorable knight and friend.

"Templar Genny… *Ahhhh!*" I screamed.

"Priest of Prophecy… no… Angel of Sacrifice… no… Father Lee Ki-Young…" Genny mumbled.

"*AAAAAAAHH!*" I yelled.

"There were… many things… I wanted… to tell you…" Genny said.

"*Heuk… heuuuung…"* I cried.

"Thank you… for everything…" Genny added.

"*Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Heuk…* Genny… Genny!" I called out.

"It was… an honor… to serve you… in the past… and in the present…" Genny added.

I felt kind of bad, but there were many things out there that were more important to me than him.

I wasn't sure if this was enough as a consolation, but I decided to never forget him.

"*AAAAAAAHHHH!*" I roared.

# CHAPTER 1008
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (15)

I couldn't control my emotions.

"*Ahh…* Genny… Genny!" I yelled.

"…"

"Gen… *Heuk… heuuuk… AAAHHH!!!*" I cried.

The sadness of losing someone precious to me engulfed me. I examined Templar Gen just in case, but he was already cold to the touch. He had perished in the body of a monster, but he looked both worried and kind of satisfied as if this was the ending that he wanted for himself.

Templar Gen probably hated himself.

It was for the sake of his mission, but he had turned his back on the light despite being a priest of the light.

Thus, he probably considered himself too unclean to stand next to the Priest of Prophecy and the God of Sacrifice and Revival, which was why he thought that this ending suited him.

A disgusting and dirty ending for the sake of the brightest light. He had chosen to at least indulge in the decision that he had made, as it was for the sake of the priest who descended from the surface world and changed his life.

"*Ahhh… ahhhhh!*"

What brought him this far was the shadow I had left behind. He believed my ridiculous lie about going up to the surface world and getting help from the

others up above. He believed I'd come back, so he spent countless hours wandering around underground.

"*AAAAAAAHHHHH!* Genny!" I cried.

I could not believe that he died just like that. I bawled while holding onto his body. I was running out of mana, and I was crying so hard that I could not breathe properly.

I couldn't control my emotions to the point that I questioned if I was too engrossed in my role.

My heart was also racing, pounding wildly against my chest. It felt like it was going to burst anytime soon. I was so out of it that I had no idea what was happening around me.

I felt weak, and I had no idea what I was doing right now.

All I knew was that I was crying while holding onto Gen's corpse.

"Genny… *Aaaaaah!*" I sobbed. Of course, my sadness lasted only for a moment because I came back to my senses.

*'Can I come back to my senses later?'*

To be honest…

*'I wasn't that sad.'*

I was thinking about using him and then throwing him away afterward, anyway.

That was the plan, so there was no reason for me to be sad.

Templar Gen… he was just a toy, and I knew that better than anyone. I was also aware of the fact that this was the best way to use him, as he was just a chess piece that I had been using to reform the Order.

In some ways, this was the best outcome for him.

I could save Kim Hyun-Sung and myself.

"*Heuk… heuuuk…*"

It was better for him to die in my stead. If I had died instead of him, then Hyun-Sung would have been devastated. The raid would have ended there.

"I'm sorry… I'm sorry… *Heuk… heuk… AAAAAH!*" I cried.

I thought of Park Deok-Gu's demise and Doom Doom Hyun-Sung's death—I reminded myself of these scenes that I saw in Kasugano Yuno's eyes. I told myself that I had to keep having sad thoughts to provoke Hyun-Sung, which was why I cried nonstop.

"I'm really… *Heuk… heuuuk…*"

He was just a traumatized toy, so this was a great outcome for him.

"*Ahh… heuk!*" I sobbed.

The pig porridge that he fed me alone was enough for me to chop his head off, and I would still not feel better after that. It was the same when he yelled at me, covered me with a dirty blanket, and wasted my energy on cleaning that moldy room.

Genny was kind of cute, but I was pretty frustrated with him.

"*Ahhhhh…* I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Genny…" I mumbled.

I knew he was just a toy, but damn it, people often grew fond of their toys.

It was about time I threw him away, but I did not want to do that just yet. It was like I had an ice cream that I was about to finish, but it somehow fell to the ground. I was in a bad mood.

Ironically, things couldn't be better, as anyone could tell that I had completely lost my mind.

I had lost my mind because someone precious to me had died. I cried while holding onto Gen's body, and I exaggerated my facial features to show Kim Hyun-Sung that I had gone crazy.

At this point, I was sure he could tell that Gen was special to me.

Kim Hyun-Sung would definitely think—no, he was already thinking about it.

The Red Goddess of War and Jung Ha-Yan attracted the monster's attention, and he awkwardly comforted me with his hand. He definitely thought about how he could have lost someone close to him if it hadn't been for Templar Gen.

However, he was not happy that Templar Gen had sacrificed himself for me. He was focused on my sadness; he was worried, and he sympathized with his deceased comrade, even though he was a bit puzzled by what was going on.

*'This is good.'*

I wanted to hug the toy a bit longer, but Kim Hyun-Sung's hand was no longer on me.

What could I do with the remaining time?

*'How can I use this?'*

"Mr. Ki-Young… Ki-Young… are you…" Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

"*Heuk… heuuuk…*" I cried.

I learned against Hyun-Sung's comfortable arms for comfort, but I pushed him away moments later.

*'Honestly, you're at fault as well. You think you have the right to comfort me?'*

I had to remind him that it was his fault as well.

*'Kim Hyun-Sung, you're disqualified, damn it!'*

He took a step backward in shock, and I looked at him with fury and resentment.

*'Take my eyes of resentment.'*

*'If you had just listened to me… Templar Gen wouldn't have died.'*

*'If you hadn't brought me back from the distant past… '*

"Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young… I—That's not…" Kim Hyun-Sung stammered.

Of course, he was surprised. Was he not expecting my resentment? However, his shock did not last long, as we were in the middle of a battle.

Bahamut wasn't friendly enough to wait until we were done filming our drama.

Bahamut rammed the Red Goddess of War before charging at us.

Seeing that, Kim Hyun-Sung had no choice but to join the battle.

I heard them fighting, but I didn't care. I looked up to the ceiling quietly as if I had given up on life. I cried hard and grabbed my head in pain.

Anyone could see that I looked out of place here.

I activated the Regressor Instruction Manual to ensure that he'd know my condition.

Sadness, confusion, despair, fear, and anger. I was angry at the bad kid who broke my toy.

I made Kim Hyun-Sung feel my burning rage toward him.

I silenced every other emotion aside from anger and got up slowly.

Of course, I couldn't really do anything here, even though I was angry. It was not like I could suddenly wield a sword or use the death of my comrade as a driving force to make a breakthrough into the next level.

All I could do was make Kim Hyun-Sung shut up, as he was trying to escape my grasp.

*'No.'*

*'I can't let it end here. I'm sure I can use him more. At the very least, I can use his pitch-black blood. '*

It was a pretty shocking idea, but I did think about it at least once because Templar Bahamut had made three breakthroughs after devouring the bull.

I assumed that I could do the same.

The pitch-black blood was an amalgamation of negative energy.

It was probably from the demon's seed that Lucifer had made, so if Bahamut could do it, I could do it, too. I scooped up the pool of blood beneath Gen's corpse and got ready to drink it quietly.

*'Templar Gen is dead.'*

However, he was going to live inside me. He was going to live inside my blood and become one with me.

I was overdue for an advancement, anyway.

This kind of ritual anyway was actually unnecessary, as I was close to the light.

I didn't reject it because I could change jobs, so I knew how to use this kind of power.

Moreover, there was a high chance that it'd be easier to summon them using this power.

The same thing happened to Bahamut, and there weren't any side effects.

It was kind of scary, but it was worth a try.

Of course, there were people against it.

"Mr. Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young! Don't!" Kim Hyun-Sung roared.

"Darling? What are you doing?! Get away from there *now!*" Cha Hee-Ra yelled.

"Oppa…" Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

However, Bahamut was running rampant, so they didn't have the time to stop me.

"No—no!!!"

I brought my hand to my lips in slow motion.

Kim Hyun-Sung attempted to stop me, but Bahamut blasted him away toward the other side. Kim Hyun-Sung looked up from the debris, and he looked like he was in despair.

*Thump.*

I had to scream, as that would make me look cooler.

"*AAAAAAAH!!*" I yelled.

I got on my knees and wrapped my arms around myself. Moments later, I heard grotesque cracking noises all over me, and wings sprouted from my back.

The problem was that they weren't ordinary wings.

I heard hissing noises afterward, and I saw a myriad of snakes popping out of my skin as if they were going on a riot. My grotesque wings sent a shiver down their spine, as they were made out of intertwining white snakes.

*'Shit, what is this? Shit, shit, shit! What is this?!'*

I grabbed my head, and my hair transformed as well.

*'Shit, they're snakes, too!'*

My hair had also turned into a bunch of white snakes with red eyes.

I assumed my eyes had become red as well.

My skin felt a bit smoother than before, and it resembled a snake's skin rather than a human's skin.

My tongue became longer as well.

*'Damn it. I must've turned into a monster! What should I do? Hyun-Sung, Ha-Yan, Hee-Ra noona. What should I do?!'*

I had no idea what to do, as I couldn't really see what I looked like, but one thing I was sure of was that black tears were flowing down my cheeks. I tried to stop the tears but it was to no avail.

Just like how Bahamut was constantly drooling, I was constantly shedding unholy tears.

*'The tears… are… kind of cool.'*

Instead of a radiant light, a burst of white darkness that seemed to be capable of devouring everything burst out of me. I assumed it was my passive skill, but the cloud of white darkness distorted the space around me.

The white darkness did not stop there.

The snakes all over me hissed, and they intertwined as if they were comforting each other. The only consolation was that the snakes weren't *that* heavy, which was great because I had to move naturally.

My entrance always had to be impactful, after all.

*‘One step.’*

*'Look at me, you lowly humans.'*

*‘Take another step.’*

*'Do you remember me, mortals? Your nightmare and fear? The Plaguelord has descended.'*

[Mythic]

[Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep]

*‘Huh?’*

[The Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep has descended.]

*‘What the—I don’t like this at all.’*

# CHAPTER 1009
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (16)

*‘This is bad. This is really bad.’*

My advancement to Doom Doom was pretty shocking, but it was a calculated move.

Actually, it would be better to say that I had no other choice.

The allied forces had gotten weaker because of Templar Genny's death.

If Bahamut absorbed Genny’s power like what he had done to the bull, we'd find ourselves in the worst-case scenario.

I took only a sip, but I had absorbed every particle of power and negative energy from that blood. Bahamut had a high resistance against Kim Hyun-Sung, so it made sense for me to absorb and use this power myself.

It was difficult to combine light and darkness, but…

*‘But I have a link called the Regressor Instruction Manual.’*

I even thought about making Kim Hyun-Sung use this negative energy.

I prepared a script that would allow the Plaguelord and Kim Hyun-Sung to reunite and join hands.

*‘This is the only time I’ll lend you my strength, and I'm the one who's going to kill you, or is that all you got?’*

I had those words in mind, but that plan fell through.

*‘His character changed too much.’*

I never imagined that he'd change to that extent.

I looked around and saw people frozen in place.

The unexpected turn of events caused the battle to stop as if time had frozen.

It was strange to see Bahamut stare at me in a daze, but it was a natural reaction.

A transcendent mythical being had just appeared, so it was natural for him to be wary of me. He was so wary that his mane stood up.

Light Ki-Young had just become his second problem, and My presence alone was enough to make him nervous.

*'It's actually better this way.'*

I had yet to completely assess the situation.

I told myself that I needed to take action, but my feet wouldn't move. Instead, I flew about one meter off the ground.

*'So I can levitate… '*

I couldn't really move fast, but it was enough to set the mood.

I didn't even need to flap my snake wings.

I moved forward slowly to show off and create a heavy atmosphere.

My movement felt foreign and strange.

I raised my hands slowly, but it didn't mean anything. I was just trying to show off.

And that was when I heard Kim Hyun-Sung's voice.

"N-No…!"

"…"

"No… no…" Kim Hyun-Sung muttered. He was crying. "No… *Heuk*… This is…"

The PTSD that he had sustained from the Plaguelord incident was triggered. The thought of that alone was enough to awaken him from a deep sleep. I was acting as if I was telling him, "It's fine now. I'm tired."

I was acting like I was on the verge of giving up on life.

"*Ah… ahh… ah…"* Kim Hyun-Sung stammered.

Jung Ha-Yan stared at me, and her unsteady gaze made it seem like she was up to something. Her face was flushed red, and her nose was bleeding.

Judging from the fact that her nose was bleeding so much to the point I could hear it dripping, it seemed like my passive skill, which was a special ability that affected the minds of those around me, truly suited me as the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep.

"*Ah… ack… ack… Huh? Uh?*" Jung Ha-Yan finally realized that her nose was bleeding.

She placed both her hands on her nose, but it wasn't enough to stop the bleeding. Her hands and face were covered in blood, and it seemed like I was seeing more whites in her eyes.

She was trembling, and it felt like she was going to be a threat to me at any moment. I was kind of scared because I had no way of knowing what she was thinking right now.

"O-O-Oppa… Oppa…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

*'Based on her reaction, I must be strong.'*

"I think… this is going to be difficult, no, it's going to be difficult," Cha Hee-Ra mumbled.

Cha Hee-Ra didn't react the same way Jung Ha-Yan did, but the blood dripping down her lips told me that she was using her superhuman willpower to withstand my passive skill.

"Physically… and mentally… I'm exhausted…" Cha Hee-Ra said.

*'No, you're not at your limit, noona. Endure it.'*

"I don't like doing this… but I think it's best if I sit this one out," Cha Hee-Ra remarked.

*'Yeah, you should do that.'*

Cha Hee-Ra was worried about losing her sanity.

My passive seemed to be extremely effective on the opposite sex. I had yet to look into it, so I was not exactly sure, but it was really effective against members of the opposite sex, especially when they were weaker than me.

Perhaps it could affect animals and monsters as well.

The crux of the matter here was one's Resistance stat. Resistance was going to determine whether one could withstand a certain mind-type skill or not, after all.

*'What should I do? How do I solve this?'*

"Kim Hyun-Sung, what kind of condition… is my darling in?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"…"

"Get ahold of yourself, you bastard. You really want to die here?" Cha Hee-Ra questioned.

"I don't… I don't feel anything. Nothing…" Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

My burning anger was gone and was replaced by indifference.

Just like the Doom Ki-Young incident, the plan was to show a new personality after awakening, which was why my first words were important. The people before me were wary of Bahamut, but they were wary of me as well.

Actually, they seemed more wary of me than Bahamut.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Noona, take Ha-Yan and get away from here. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Cha Hee-Ra. No quest rewards were declared, so Cha Hee-Ra will not receive a reward.]

She replied immediately.

[Creating an Epic-rank Forced Quest.]

[Shit… I was wondering what was going on… I'm glad. But don't talk to me telepathically next time, darling. Unless you want to be in danger. (0/1)]

With that, Cha Hee-Ra grabbed Jung Ha-Yan and disappeared from my sight. I got a bit scared when I saw Jung Ha-Yan staring at me while getting dragged away. Fortunately, she did not do anything drastic, so I was relieved.

It felt like it was time to turn around and start talking.

"M-Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung muttered.

"…"

"Are you… okay?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

[Please come here.]

My voice seemed to have changed. I was embarrassed to say this, but I sounded so wicked that it felt exaggerated. I spoke softly, but my voice filled

the entire cavern.

“Just now…”

[I think I know what you’re afraid of. I’m still the same person you’re thinking about. Please… come here.]

“…”

[Don’t be afraid… *Ah…* Come here. Please… Please come here~ Mr. Hyun-Sung.]

I said it like a siren luring sailors into the sea. It was like I was singing to him to come here.

Kim Hyun-Sung walked slowly toward me. I told him through the Regressor Instruction Manual that I had no intention of harming him. I also added the fact that I was the same Lee Ki-Young.

I thought it'd be best to help him out a little so he could make the choice on his own.

My personality had changed slightly, but this version of me remembered every memory we shared, and I made sure to recall those memories. Those scenes were probably being sent to Kim Hyun-Sung right now.

I was telling him that I remembered everything, including our famous lines.

*‘Mind attack!’*

The way I looked made it look like I was attempting to attack him mentally, but that was what I was actually aiming for because Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he wasn’t in the condition to fight right now. Actually, it'd be better to exclude other emotions.

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung definitely found me strange.

Anyone would think that way.

Just before this, I took out my anger on him, but now, I was telling him to get closer to me, so he'd be an idiot if he didn't find this strange. Despite that, he was still moving toward me.

I was angry at him earlier, and he had no choice but to accept it.

Perhaps he was probably feeling puzzled right now, but I could not say for sure, as I was having a hard time reading his emotions.

He was feeling a range of emotions, such as regret, anger, despair, and confusion. He was also questioning how we ended up in this situation.

I thought he had gotten a little stronger mentally, but the wall he built slowly up until now was getting destroyed really fast, as if it were getting hit by a battering ram. The only wall he had left was the comfort of knowing that I remembered him.

*'At least he feels better than the Doom Ki-Young incident.'*

"Mr. Ki-Young…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

[Yes… I'm *that* Lee Ki-Young.]

Of course, I didn't forget to tap into his mind using the Regressor Instruction Manual.

I slowly broke down walls of useless emotions such as caution and discomfort. Actually, I had to leave those alone, as those emotions were the foundation of my work here.

With each step he took, Kim Hyun-Sung became more and more confused.

*'But there's less emotion I need to exclude than I thought… '*

It was probably because of the brand-new attribute that I had just obtained.

I hadn't done anything to him yet, but Kim Hyun-Sung was walking toward me as if he were sleepwalking. To others, he seemed like he was crawling into a trap of his own will.

Actually, he *was* crawling into a trap.

“Mr. Ki-Young… Are you… Are you okay?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

It was like he was under a spell or was half-asleep.

Actually, he was under a spell, but this was more systematic and complex than a mere spell.

[Yes, I’m… fine.]

“I-I’m… I’m glad,” he said.

I could see him feeling relieved with his eyes half open.

“I’m really glad. I’m… I’m really… *Heuk*… glad that you’re okay,” Kim Hyun-Sung cried.

*'You’re crying again? You’re always crying. You’re such a crybaby.'*

[Mr. Hyun-Sung.]

*‘Why is your mind so weak?’*

I knew I had the Regressor Instruction Manual, but it felt like it was over in thirty seconds. I really had to create items or artifacts tailored for him. If an enemy capable of attacking minds were to appear, things would quickly become disastrous.

[You see…]

“Yes?” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

[T-That’s… really scary.]

“W-What? Afraid… What…”

[That monster over there. I-I’m really scared of it.]

“*Ah…* I see. I-I’ll… take care of it,” Kim Hyun-Sung offered.

[Can I help you?]

“What? That’s…”

[I want to help as well.]

“I-I see. If that's what you want… but you have to be safe…” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

First of all, I had to be on the same level as him.

I knew that Kim Hyun-Sung could wield his holy power.

I wasn’t sure how he learned it, but he sent me a quest once.

I combined my negative energy with his holy power. The white and black energies took form, transforming into a giant white skeleton that resembled the Red Goddess of War.

My power alone wasn’t enough to do anything against Bahamut, but it was a different story with Hyun-Sung's help.

[Would you please follow me?]

“S-Sure!” Kim Hyun-Sung answered enthusiastically. He knew what I wanted. If I pointed in a certain direction, he'd immediately head that way.

[You’re doing… well. Yes, just like that.]

“T-Thank you,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*‘It’s kind of hard.’*

Of course, it was difficult, but our souls were connected, so there wasn't any internal strife. The moment Kim Hyun-Sung turned around, the giant created with both holy power and negative power turned around and drew its sword.

*Boom.*

[I think it would be better… if you clean it up…]

“As you wish… Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

[For me.]

“Yes… for…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

The giant of sunset and white darkness swung its sword.

The arm of friendly villain Bahamut fell to the ground.

“…”

[…]

*‘…’*

"*Roaaaaaaaaaaaar!*"

*‘Why is it so strong?’*

I couldn’t believe it.

# CHAPTER 1010
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (17)

*Beep!*

My ears were ringing, and I[1] couldn't hear anything.

"*Ah!*" I blurted unknowingly, but my word was not going to change anything.

The dust that entered my lungs made me cough.

The world around me was spinning around me, so I had no idea what was going on.

However, there was one thing for sure—someone was carrying me.

I felt better when I felt something cold on my face.

I stretched unknowingly and suddenly tasted something refreshing.

I drank ravenously, even though I had no idea what I was drinking.

My vision became clearer and clearer. I stretched my hand out and unconsciously took a big swig of whatever was in my hand. Moments later, I could finally see what was going on around me.

There were priests running around busily to treat the wounded, and there were agonized groans everywhere.

“They’re still alive,” a priest said.

“Let’s give them first aid…” another priest suggested.

“Do we have any potions left?” they asked.

“Hurry up and move. Hurry.”

I realized that I was in a completely different place.

*‘Just now, I’m sure… I’m sure… I was hunting a bull.’*

It felt like I had lost a piece of my memory, so I grabbed my aching head and tried to remember what happened. I nodded immediately because I could clearly remember that we were in the middle of a raid.

The ceiling collapsed, and Bahamut fell down.

After that…

*‘I was busy following orders.’*

The sudden variable made us commence a retreat. We were following the planned route when I heard a loud explosion.

I saw rocks falling on the expedition members.

I was sure Colonel Smith was with—

“*Ah…*”

*‘Colonel Smith… Where’s Colonel Smith?’*

“Captain Sophia?” someone said.

“…” “Are you okay?” they asked.

I turned to the owner of the voice and saw one of my team members.

They had injuries here and there, but they were still in good shape.

“What… happened?” I asked.

“I-I’ll report what happened, Captain. We were in the middle of the bull raid

when the ceiling—”

“I already know that part,” I interrupted them.

“Afterwards, headquarters ordered us to retreat. While we were escaping using the route that the headquarters had told us to follow, there was an unexpected explosion,” they explained.

“And reinforcements came to rescue the isolated members,” I said.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Where’s Colonel Smith?” I asked.

“He’s not in the condition to move. Actually, h-he ran all the way here while carrying you,” they added.

*‘Colonel Smith… ’*

I smiled bitterly. It seemed that the connection I had made in the Federation had become helpful to me again.

“More importantly, you need to start moving again,” they said.

"Hm?" I asked.

“The field commander is seriously injured…” they said.

“So I have to report in,” I said.

“Yes, ma’am.”

It was part of the procedure.

I was sure headquarters knew everything that was going on, but a report was a completely different story.

Colonel Smith wasn’t in the condition to move, and the field commander was

seriously injured, so the next person in charge had to submit a report.

Was it the Friendship Clan? I remembered there were a few people above me, but those people were either dead or injured, as I actually had to make a report myself.

I got up slowly and was struck by a wave of fatigue and pain.

I frowned due to the pain, but I could still move.

“If it’s too difficult for you…”

“No, I’ll go. I can’t abandon my duty,” I said.

“I’ll lead the way, Captain,” the soldier said.

“No, rest more. That’s an order,” I ordered.

“Yes, ma’am.”

I started walking toward the portable Commander's Camp.

When I walked up, I was asked an obvious question, and I responded immediately.

“I’m Captain Sophia, and I’m part of—”

“Confirmed, Captain Sophia. You can go inside,” the soldier said.

And that was when I heard a monotone voice…

[The Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep has descended.]

There was a loud boom, and I felt my heart drop.

I was trembling, and it felt like my blood was rushing to my head. "Oppressive" was the only word I could use to describe this mysterious energy, and it felt like it had engulfed me. Everyone in the Commander’s

Camp looked in the same direction.

"*Ah…*"

I turned to look at what they were looking at.

*'What is that?'*

"F-Father Lee Ki-Young?" someone muttered, but I could not really comprehend it.

*'What… the hell is that… '*

There was something indescribable on the Goddess' Mirror.

The figure had hair made out of white snakes, and he also had wings made out of the same snakes. The way the snakes wriggled around each other looked like they were mating. "Odd" was the only word I could use to describe their strange movements.

It was bizarre. Anyone could see that he didn't look human, and he clearly didn't look like the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country and the Commander-in-Chief of this expedition.

The alien figure opened his mouth, and I saw a long and forked tongue.

A bizarre smile was tugging at his lips, and pitch-black tears were flowing down his face.

The smile tugging at his lips was bizarre, but it was more beautiful than anything else.

*'It's beautiful… '*

"*Ah…* it's beautiful…"

It was really beautiful.

*'Yeah, that sounds right.'*

I had no idea what creature I was staring at, but he looked elegant.

Moreover, he also looked fragile—he looked so fragile as if he'd break at the slightest touch, but his fragility was what made him beautiful.

His transparent-looking pale skin looked smoother than anything else, and his thin, slender fingers seemed capable of performing the most dramatic performance in the world. The tears falling from his red eyes also looked like the sweetest juice in the world.

I couldn't understand my own thoughts, but… I wanted to have a taste of that juice, even if it meant selling my soul to a demon.

If I could make eye contact with that being and hold his hands, I'd give him everything.

The beautiful being hovering in mid-air was a breathtaking sight.

*'I* want… *him.'*

The word "possessiveness" suddenly popped into my mind. Afterward, a variety of disgusting emotions filled my head. Scenes I couldn't express with words gnawed away at my brain. Blood rushed to my head and then dripped down somewhere.

I then realized that blood was dripping down my eyes.

My brain was actively trying to ignore it, but I ended up noticing it, as my vision getting redder and redder by the second.

For some reason, however, the redder my vision, the clearer that beautiful being became in my eyes. My vision had gotten redder, but the color of that alien figure remained the same.

*'I want him. I want that. I want to make it mine.'*

I would be really happy if he were mine. I'd hide him somewhere where no one could see him and drink his sweet juice to my heart's content. The emptiness and thirst in my heart would surely be satiated by then.

I'd be able to see what was inside him and get to know him better.

*'He's mine.'*

I would not let anyone else have him.

I stepped forward.

Perhaps it was just me, but it felt like blood was flowing out of my ears as well.

[Please come here~]

I heard a voice, and it was like caressing my brain.

It felt like soft hands had entered my brain, massaging each and every wrinkle on it.

The tingling sensation was affecting my mind.

It was like my mind was…

*'It feels like my mind is turning into ice cream.'*

He spoke more words, and those words felt like they were taking a bite from the ice cream, which was my brain.

"I-I-I…"

A towering giant fell to his side.

I checked the giant's face before he collapsed and saw blood flowing from his eyes, ears, nose, and lips.

The giant was shaking as if he had lost his sanity, but I smiled at the sight.

The giant was vomiting blood, and I was still smiling.

The giant had a bizarre smile as well. No, it was not a bizarre smile. It was the happiest smile in the world. Was he seeing the same being as me? Or perhaps he was standing before that being?

"*Ahh…!*"

"*AAAAAH!!*"

"Sanctuary!" A clear, melodious voice echoed, vanquishing all of my thoughts.

Elena, the Elf Queen of the Blue Guild, appeared before me.

She was the only High Elf with emerald hair. After casting a spell, she entered the camp, and I was angry at her for what she had done instead of being thankful to her for bringing me back to my senses.

"You've never had any direct contact with him, but… you're in that state. *Whoo…* Are you okay?" Elena asked.

"…"

"…"

*'What… What was I doing?'*

I looked at the Goddess' Mirror again and saw a peculiar sight.

The Sunset Swordsman had summoned a giant. The giant severed Bahamut's arm, but Bahamut's arm regenerated in an instant. The giant moved again, swinging its colossal sword.

However, all of my attention was on that bizarre being.

*'A mind attack… '*

Was it a special ability? Or… a curse?

Moments ago, I was under a spell just like that Sunset Swordsman who was swinging his sword with a blank face.

“Thank you, Miss Elena… I’m—”

“You must forget everything that you saw here,” Elena interrupted me.

“…”

“The moment you get out of here, you must forget everything,” Elena repeated.

It was easy to figure out why.

*‘That's really… the Commander-in-Chief.’*

“This isn’t a request,” Elena said.

“…”

“I’m sure you’re well aware why I’m telling you this,” Elena added.

Elena of the Blue Guild was known to be gentle, so her attitude right now made it clear that I was correct.

*‘That’s really… the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild.’*

I wasn’t sure whether the continent could overcome this crisis.

No, the continent could bring down Demon Bahamu, but…

*‘That’s… ’*

“What… the hell… is that…” I mumbled.

The continent was up against an even bigger threat than Bahamut.

I felt dizzy again, so I placed my trembling hands on my head.

*An illustration of Jung Ha-Yan is included on the next page.

wooden spoon: It’s an illustration of Jung Ha-Yan in a wedding dress!

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1. Captain Sophia’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1011
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (18)

There were constant universal laws out there. Light and darkness; darkness and light. These two elements could not coexist, and they had opposite natures. This universal law applied to the continent as well.

I had no idea why, but it was just the law—like how fire and water could not mix.

I had been researching magic, holy spells, sorcery, magitech, and even supernatural abilities, but this law was the first one to pop up in my[1] head.

It was considered common sense here.

It had been a law since time immemorial, and it would remain true forever.

The reason this giant was stronger than I had imagined was that it had transcended the existing laws. It was a cliche involving the combination of two opposing powers to create a brand-new power.

*'It's cliched.'*

The reason elements that couldn't coexist managed to come together was that Kim Hyun-Sung and I were connected spiritually.

Our connection couldn't be explained with formulas, and we were above any formulas out there. I was not exactly sure, but this incident proved that our bond was above the universal laws.

*'It has a nice ring to it.'*

The sunset giant illuminated the white darkness, and the giant that looked normal just a moment ago started changing. The giant sprouted holy orange

horns and tightly woven orange armor. It also had an orange helmet that looked sturdy enough to protect it from the white darkness.

The giant's sword hilt was in the form of a snake, and it raised its sword along with the Sunset Swordsman. The giant also had golden eyes as if it were trying to prove that Kim Hyun-Sung and I had a connection.

"*Roooooooooooooooooar!*"

The disgusting monster grabbed its severed arm upon detecting a threat. The severed arm instantly regenerated, but I was sure the monster was still in shock. Bahamut knew that the giant before him was strong enough to harm him.

*'We just need to be on the same level.'*

Kim Hyun-Sung was the Sword God

He looked like he had completely lost his mind, but that wasn't the case at all.

If I had to evaluate his condition, he was a puppet with a will of his own. Although he was under a spell, he was still as strong as ever. He could think for himself, and he could fight more recklessly than usual.

A massive arm swung toward the giant, but the giant had no plans of engaging in a contest of raw strength. It swung its sword at a strange angle, deflecting the attack.

Sparks flew, and the monster lost his balance.

He immediately found his balance again, but the sword hacked at him relentlessly.

It was a beautiful sight to see the giant blocking the oncoming attack and attacking immediately. It was like a well-rehearsed movement.

The giant swung its sword, and the sunset remained in the air as if it were

drawing an image. I was sure Bahamut was aware of the fact that he couldn't run away from this fight. He moved instinctively, blocking the giant's sword using his large horns.

"*Argh.*"

*'He managed to cut off his arm. Are his horns that sturdy?'*

Unfortunately, it was not a smart move from Bahamut.

*Boom!*

A thunderous boom echoed as Kim Hyun-Sung's sword and the monster's horns clashed. Immediately afterward, the giant took a stance with its sword.

*'He's going to lose his horns.'*

And that was when the monster swung his tail toward the giant.

*'Close.'*

He had to have sensed a threat to his life again. The sunset giant did not move despite the attack. It grabbed the monster's tail with its arm and smacked it away with the hilt of its sword.

*Thud.*

The monster's tail was deflected, and the monster staggered. He flailed his arms wildly, defending himself against Kim Hyun-Sung's flurry of attacks. The monster was counterattacking as well, but there were no issues whatsoever, as I was watching him intently.

The monster seemed to be channeling a spell using his negative energy, but Kim Hyun-Sung moved nonstop, attacking his fangs, horns, four arms, and his towering figure.

I heard a *crack.*

Kim Hyun-Sung calmly blocked the monster's attack, which was so strong that it sounded like it tore even space apart. This was made possible because the two of us had a shared thought and vision.

While Kim Hyun-Sung was busy landing heavy attacks on the monster while moving around at incredible speeds, the monster finally couldn't take it and let out a roar.

Tentacles sprouted all over the monster, and they all made a beeline for the giant, but it was useless. It looked like the monster was stuck in an endless loop of staggers, and Kim Hyun-Sung made quick work of the former's tentacles.

I was sure the people watching this scene through the Goddess' Mirrors had no idea what was going on. The only thing they could probably see was an orange light drawn by the orange sword, which was illuminating the pitch-black basement of the Underground Temple.

*'Damn, he's strong. Why are you so strong, Hyun-Sung?'*

Perhaps it was because he was no longer hesitant.

Anyway, I felt bad for Bahamut.

*'He could have a chance if they dueled with swords.'*

The fact that he had transformed into a wild monster was a great advantage to us.

[Mr. Hyun-Sung…].

"Y-Yes," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

[You're doing really well.]

"T-Thank you, Mr. Ki-Young. Thank you," he said.

[You're… doing well… but I'm really bored.]

"What?"

[I'm really bored.]

*'I'm telling you to make this more entertaining.'*

"*Ah…"*

*'You don't understand what I'm saying? Let's try being a little more blunt, then.'*

[You didn't hear me say that I'm feeling bored?]

*'You have the ability, so show it off already.'*

"I-I'm sorry. I'll… I'll do better…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled. He was under a spell and could not think clearly, but he definitely knew what I wanted to see.

If one had something up one's sleeve, one ought to use it.

The giant's role had yet to be established. I was sure he had a trick or two up his sleeves.

*'Show me those tricks. Show me your skills or special moves.'*

Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes were empty and dazed, but I saw him gritting his teeth.

The orange line suspended in the air started moving slowly.

*'What the heck?'*

The giant swung its sword in an effort to inflict serious wounds or create an opening. The orange line that had been suspended in the air all this while suddenly flew toward the monster as soon as the giant swung its sword downward with both hands.

*Fwoooooosh!*

The sword flew toward the monster.

A grotesque noise echoed afterward.

The monster had curled up in an effort to defend himself against the flurry of attacks imbued with negative energy, so he had no choice but to take the brunt of Kim Hyun-Sung's powerful move.

The attack did not sever his limbs, but he was blasted away into the distance.

*Boom!*

He crashed into the wall, destroying it.

*'He's pretty cool.'*

There was dust all over the place, and I saw the monster emerge from the cloud of dust with a roar.

I had been staring at the monster all this while, so I knew that it was too late for Kim Hyun-Sung to react. The giant and the monster clashed once more; the giant was blasted away this time.

"H*aa…"*

"I'm… sorry. I'm really… really… *Ugh…"*

*Crack! Kaboom! Craaaack!*

We probably would not get another chance like this, and I was sure the monster thought the same thing. The monster held the giant down with both hands as more arms sprouted from his back. Those arms then proceeded to give the giant a beatdown.

*'He's a monster, all right.'*

His Endurance, Regeneration Rate, Strength, Agility, and Stamina were out of this world. His skills were extremely powerful as well. Considering the fact that we had been trying to tire him out using the expedition team, it was amazing how he could still fight.

The orange giant was getting buried in the ground, and the dungeon trembled with every knuckle sandwich that the former had to eat from Bahamut.

Bahamut was not really inflicting any real damage on the giant, but the latter's armor was slowly getting destroyed.

[*Haa…* Really?]

“I’m sorry… I’m sorry, Mr. Ki-Young…” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*'No, it’s not your fault. This happened all because I wanted to see your abilities… so you don’t need to apologize.'*

*Clench.* The giant gritted its teeth and grabbed the two arms that were holding it down.

The moment the monster’s fist was going to land on its hand, it raised its head, removed one of its arms, and got up. The monster took a stance and charged at the giant, but the orange sword was already in the giant’s hand.

*Boom!*

The giant ran with all its might and swung its sword.

A deafening explosion occurred, and the monster was blown away.

The monster immediately recovered his balance, and then he proceeded to defend himself while attacking at the same time. I could see that the monster was also trying to read Kim Hyun-Sung’s movements.

Unfortunately, before the monster could even take a step forward with his

left foot, his arm went flying, exposing his chest to Kim Hyun-Sung. Just as he was about to defend himself, the orange sword flew past him.

"*Roaaaaaaaaaaaar!*" the monster roared in agonizing pain. A torrent of pitch-black blood spurted out of the wound. The disgusting monster decided to move forward instead of running away, even though he was in the worst-case scenario.

He took another step forward and swung his fist.

Perhaps the monster had lost his mind due to the extreme pain, as it failed to see that it was a trap. The pitch-black blood that had fallen on the ground transformed and charged at the giant.

Kim Hyun-Sung was not surprised, as he knew that was going to happen. My vision, which was capable of seeing everything on this battlefield, saw the ambush. The pitch-black blood had transformed into the monster's tail, and it swung toward the giant.

*Fwoooosh!*

Our connected souls capable of ignoring even the fundamental laws of the universe told Kim Hyun-Sung my thoughts.

Ability—the same ability that Kim Hyun-Sung had shown just a few moments ago.

The giant swung its sword from below. It was trying to split the pitch-black blood into two and then immediately inflict a fatal injury on the monster. However, the pitch-black blood was fake; the real attack was the tail.

Instead of attacking the oncoming tail, the giant took another step forward and charged at the monster. Naturally, the monster’s tail changed directions and flew toward the giant’s neck, but the orange line in mid-air swept past it, splitting it into two.

"*Roooooooooooooooooar!*"

"*Yaaaaaaaaaah!*"

The powerful sword strike pierced the monster.

"*Yaaaah!*"

Kim Hyun-Sung let out a strange shout, but his trembling voice told me that the monster's fleshly body was extremely durable. The orange Sword God was slowing down. His spine? Or was there something wrong with his muscles?

*'Damn it. Is this his limit?'*

[A little more… Just a little more, Mr. Hyun-Sung. A little more!]

"*Ugh…* okay," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

[Just a little more… Hurry! Hurry! Damn it! You just need to… do a little more… A little moooore!]

"Okay!" Kim Hyun-Sung exclaimed and clenched his fist.

[Push through! Push through. Damn it, man! Is that all you can do? Is it?!]

"W-What? N-No!" he answered.

[Don't stop! Don't… Damn it! Hey! Just a little more… Don't stop, man! Yes! That's right! That's what I'm talking about! *AAAAH*—shit!!! I told you not to stop!]

His sword stopped in the middle of splitting the monster's body into two, and it wasn't moving anymore.

*'Damn it, damn it! It's not enough.'*

The monster's regeneration rate was extremely high, so I couldn't help but feel anxious at the sight. The monster grabbed Kim Hyun-Sung's sword with

both hands, and a pitch-black energy gathered at his mouth.

[Bahamut… Bahamut!]

*'Wake up, Warrior. Wake up! Damn it! Wake up! Warrior!'*

[Bahamut!]

*'Wake up, Warrior. Escape from the monster's grasp and come to me!'*

Was it just me, or did the disgusting monster's eyes suddenly change into the eyes of the reliable Bahamut, whom I was familiar with?

*'Wake up, please! Don't lose yourself! My Bahamut!'*

He was looking at me. Perhaps I was mistaken, but he looked like there was something he wanted to say to me.

However, it probably had nothing to do with me.

[Now! Now is your chance. Now! Now! Mr. Hyun-Sung! Now! I said *now!]*

"*AAAAAAHHHHHH!*"

The stuck sword was finally moving once more.

The monster's roar was making my ears ring, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn't stop.

He moved forward and put more strength into his sword!

[Damn it! Damn it! That's what I'm talking about! That's it! Hyun-Suuuung! Hyun-Suuuuuuung!]

Kim Hyun-Sung's sword tore apart the monster's flesh and bones.

"*Pant… pant… pant…*"

It was an unbelievable sight, and this sight was only made possible because

the hearts of two people had become one. This victory was only made possible because we resembled a balanced scale that resembled the epitome of equilibrium.

Bahamut had been split into two, and I was sure no one could deny that this victory only happened because of our unbreakable bond.

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1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1012
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (19)

As always, a radiant sunset filled the basement.

The beautiful orange light pervaded the basement in a way that made everything look surreal.

Bahamut's body had been split into two, but it had yet to fall to the ground. Unbelievably, he was still resisting. He grabbed Kim Hyun-Sung's sword with both hands and was about to unleash his nauseating Breath when the orange Sword God thrust his sword forward, piercing him.

*Kabooooooooooom!*

Rather than saying that Bahamut's body was severed cleanly, it would be better to say that Kim Hyun-Sung had used his special power to sever Bahamut's body into two.

In an instant, a shockwave swept across everything, kicking up dust and debris. I was puzzled for a moment because the shockwave felt like a meteor had struck the ground, but I could not really say for sure.

Kim Hyun-Sung’s sword didn’t just sever Bahamut's body.

It would be more fitting to say that it overcame the disgusting pitch-black power that was resisting the sunset.

The resistance was so strong, so it was natural for the two powers to clash. The winner of the tug of war was none other than our lovely regressor, Kim Hyun-Sung.

[Shit! This is what I’m talking about! Hyun-Suuung! Hyun-Suuuuung!]

*‘I knew our Hyun-Sung could do it.’*

[That was really cool! So cool, man!]

*‘There’s a reason I invested in Hyun-Sung Coin.’*

[The hero! The Sunset Swordsman! I believed in you, man!]

*‘This is what I wanted. As expected from our regressor!’*

[This is the Kim Hyun-Sung I know!]

*‘This is what I wanted from our regressor!’*

[Hyun-Suuuuung!]

*‘Look at how manly he looks! That’s our regressor!’*

In the end, the monster’s body was cut in half, but it had been a difficult fight.

[Come here! Come here, Hyun-Sung!]

*‘I couldn't really understand the hype, but I finally understand why people go crazy over sports… ’*

I felt like a brand-new world had just opened its doors for me, but I felt like going crazy upon realizing the difficulty of this fight. I couldn't help but think about launching a sports competition on the continent using mock battles to increase the overall strength level of the people throughout the continent.

Of course, I also thought it'd be really popular.

*‘It’s making my heart race.’*

I was in a good mood, and I felt like dancing around.

Based on just the results alone, all we had done was take down the monster, but it was extremely difficult to get here. It all worked out because Draktaris

and Templar Genny had been waiting for me.

The mission that I carried out with Ji-Hye noona and Commander Jin told me that even if we were to avoid factoring in Bahamut's increased HP and Endurance due to the demon's seed, we'd still struggle to defeat him.

The fight was close, and the small opening that the monster showed at the end was what helped us achieve this feat.

Kim Hyun-Sung was panting, and he was struggling to move. Those were enough proof to show that this fight was a grueling one. The orange giant disappeared, and Kim Hyun-Sung collapsed to the ground immediately afterward.

The sight told me that Kim Hyun-Sung had truly reached his limits.

He sprawled out on the ground, breathing heavily.

He forced himself to get up in order to carry out the order that I gave him just now, but he seemed to be having a hard time maintaining his balance as if he were a newborn fawn. I ran up to him and hugged him as he collapsed.

I patted his head and told him that he did a good job.

[Shit! Shit! You did well, Hyun-Sung! Man!]

"*Ah…* T-Thank you," Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

Of course, I didn't forget to criticize him for making me nervous with his silent treatment.

[*Ptooey!* You disgraceful bastard! You nauseating jerk! How dare you suddenly appear here and put me in a frustrating situation!]

*'Do you have any idea how much I suffered? I could scold you all I want, and it still wouldn't relieve my anger.'*

“*Haa… haa… gasp…*”

[Are you tired, Hyun-Sung?]

“No… I’m not. I can still…”

[No, no. You can rest if you’re tired. Our Hyun-Sung, rest all you want. Should I set up a bed for you?]

“I-I’m fi—”

[Lie comfortably and rest.]

“Is he… dead?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

[Hey! Just rest and stop asking questions like that.]

Kim Hyun-Sung sprawled out on the ground as if I had ordered him to do it. It made sense. I was sure that the act of standing up alone was taking a toll on him.

“*Haaaa… haaa…*”

Just as I thought, he looked like he was still having a hard time breathing. I said comforting words rather than scolding him, as he was at his limits both physically and mentally.

[You did really well today.]

“T-Thank…”

[So, just rest.]

“Okay. T-Thank… you,” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

*‘That Bahamut jerk went too far.’*

I still couldn’t believe that he was rolling on the ground despite getting cut in

half.

[This bastard is really persist—]

The end of hardship meant the beginning of happiness.

The one and only threat to the continent was already dead—

“…”

"*Ugh… ah…”*

[*Uh…* Hyun-Sung?]

“…”

[Are you sleeping?]

Just then, the monster’s finger twitched.

*‘Uh… ’*

Just then, many different thoughts popped into my head.

I looked over at the lower half of Bahamut's body and saw a wriggling clump of pitch-black blood. It seemed like it had a will of its own as it was slowly making its way to the upper half of Bahamut's body.

I felt a shiver down my spine, and I blanked out at the sight.

*‘Shit, shit. What’s going on? What’s happening all of a sudden?’*

*'What the hell is that?'*

"*Uwaaaaah…”*

[Hyun-Sung?]

His fingers moved once more.

*'How does this even make sense? How… is this possible?'*

I knew that his regeneration rate was extremely high.

*'But this is going too far.'*

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung, but he had completely lost consciousness after I told him that he could rest. I also knew better than anyone that he wasn't in the condition to fight.

Kim Hyun-Sung had nothing left, as he had exhausted everything he had in the battle just now. If he were to fight in his current condition, he'd suffer from the side effects of such strenuous exertion.

*'What about Hee-Ra noona?'*

Was she watching us right now?

Unfortunately, she was probably far away along with Jung Ha-Yan, and the other expedition members.

While I was having other thoughts, Bahamut's lower body was finally reattached to his upper body. I was sure Bahamut was exhausted as well, but I couldn't help but frown at the sight.

*'Tenacious bastard.'*

This was all his fault.

*'This disgusting and nauseating bastard… '*

*'Do I have any potions or catalysts left? Or is there anything I can do? Can I… stop him myself?'* I grabbed my head, feeling like I was having a headache.

And that was when something miraculous happened…

"Priest… of Prophecy…" I heard a faint voice coming from the monster.

[…]

"Fa… ther…"

It was such a sad voice.

*'He got his memories back… Bahamut! He… '*

He came back to his senses.

"This time… This… Time…"

[Bahamut…?]

"*Uwah… uh…* Father…"

*'Don't revive, man. Just don't.'*

[Bahamut… Bahamut! You've… come back to your senses… *Heuk…]*

"The… orange… demon…"

I realized just then that Bahamut wasn't in his right mind. He seemed to be in a daze.

I wasn't sure how many memories he had recovered, but he was probably recalling that battle. Perhaps he could remember reacting to my voice, and there was a chance that he was recalling the scene when Kim Hyun-Sung had split him into two.

A powerful shockwave burst out of Bahamut, but he was saying a bunch of nonsense without looking around. I wasn't sure whether he was even aware of the fact that he had been split into two.

Actually, I couldn't even see his eyes anymore.

"You… You…”

"Father… how…”

[…]

"How long… h-have I… been asleep…”

[Bahamut… *Heuk*… Bahamut… *Heuk… heuuk…]*

*'I'll just keep crying for now.'*

I hugged the monster's large and disgusting head—no, I hugged the head of the demon who had no choice but to accept the demon's seed. I hugged him tightly while crying. I hugged with sincerity as if I were telling him not to die and that he couldn't die here.

Pitch-black tears flowed down nonstop, and I was being careful so that my tears wouldn't accidentally end up in his mouth. I wasn't sure how many of his senses were still working, but he had to be aware of the fact that I was near him.

It was over.

The orange demon was dead; the Angel of Sacrifice had been freed from the demon's grasp. Of course, some sacrifices had to be made. Templar Bahamut was dying, and it was highly likely that this fact was being written in his head at the moment.

[More importantly Bahamut… *Heuk…* Bahamut…]

Bahamut probably thought that he protected me and that he actually did something.

As expected, he started trembling due to the tumultuous emotions in his heart. He raised his hand slowly. I thought he couldn't do that anymore, but he managed to raise his hand. The sight made me feel nervous and worried. I

felt like he was trying to pat my head, so I grabbed his hand first.

"Don't… Don't cry… Father."

[*Heuk… heuuk… heuuuuuuuuk… heuk…]*

"I'm… I'm okay…"

[Please don't die, Bahamut… Please…]

"I'm… okay… Fa… ther…"

Was it because he couldn't forgive himself for being a monster? His voice… he clearly sounded like he was ready to die.

"Now… everything… It's time to end everything… It's finally that time…"

That remark was a bolt from the blue, and it was a remark that tore my heart apart.

[*Ack… Heuuuk… heuuuk… Ahhhhh…]*

"I think it's time… to end it."

[*Ahhhhh… Heuk… AAAAHHH!*]

# CHAPTER 1013
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (20)

Templar Bahamut was a hero and a loyal follower of Lucifer in the distant past, and he had lived a life following the light.

His faith was both his life and his goal.

He was a man who had devoted his entire life to eradicating evil and enforcing justice.

He never cowered for the sake of protecting the continent and the people beloved by the light. He thought the power he had was a gift from the Goddess. He was neither arrogant nor conceited.

He was a hero who genuinely believed in his faith, and his faith had never wavered.

The hero of ancient times was now at the crossroads of life and death.

[*Heuk… heuuuk…]*

I could not stop crying. I knew his life better than anyone, so I couldn’t help but find him pitiful. I wanted to support his decision, but as his friend and someone who understood him the most, I just couldn’t accept this ending.

"…”

[*Ack… heuuuk…]*

He was forced to make that mistake, but he couldn't stop regretting it. He understood better than anyone that what he did was unforgivable. Once known as a warrior of the goddess, he sold his soul to a demon and abandoned his life as a human.

Instead of embracing his glorious faith, he embraced the nauseating darkness, and he ended up hating himself for it. The glimmer in his eyes faded, and he could no longer see the world objectively. His wise nature became twisted, losing its light, and in the end, he became a beast who only relied on his instincts.

The red blood that the goddess had gifted to him had become pitch-black. He became so drunk on that blood that he did horrible things that I couldn't even talk about.

*‘You’d be a real psychopath if you try to survive this… ’*

Bahamut finally regained consciousness, but he probably felt like all of this was too much to bear.

Naturally, he felt like he needed to take responsibility for all of this and that he had to be the one to do it.

"D-Don’t cry, Priest of Prophecy…”

[*Heuk… heuuuk…]*

*'Idiot.'*

"Please don’t cry…”

[*Heuuk… heuung… heuk…]*

"You don’t… need to be sad. It’s a sin. I committed… a sin."

[…]

"You know very well… that the sin I committed cannot be forgiven no matter what I do…”

[N-No… *Heuk…* Bahamut… this isn’t your fault.]

"…"

[Even if it's your fault, I don't care. If you did commit a sin, I'll carry that sin for you. We'll… We'll face it together… and bear it. S-So please… get up. P-Please don't give up.]

"Y-You've always… been kind… Father."

[…]

"You're so… kind. The moment I met you, I instantly knew that… you're kind…"

[…]

"I-I remember that day. I still clearly remember the first time we met."

[Me, too… Bahamut. I remember it clearly as well.]

"I was pretty rude… though. I was aggressive and the first thing I asked was… who you were… Thinking about it now makes me laugh."

[No, you were…]

"It was only for a moment… It was really only for a moment… but during that time… it felt like I got a glimpse of your life, Priest of Prophecy… I mean, Angel of Sacrifice…"

[…]

"With your pure white wings spread wide… and your glowing golden eye… I saw you looking at me."

[Bahamut…]

"For a moment, I thought I was imagining things… but I knew… that I wasn't seeing things…"

Bahamut was gasping for air.

I wasn't sure whether his regenerative ability was active or not, but it seemed like his body was no longer regenerating. The pitch-black blood, which looked like it had a mind of its own, became quiet, making me feel even more relieved.

[Bahamut.]

My job was to sympathize with him. I hid my gloomy expression, but as always, I was armed with courage and perseverance.

I needed to be positive while hiding my sadness.

I had to be an optimist who believed that Bahamut wasn't going to die. I had to believe that he was going to get up and go back to his original self and that everything was going to be fine.

I smiled like a fool to help him feel less nervous. Anyone could see that I was denying reality.

I was praying like a fool as well, hoping that the worst-case scenario wouldn't come.

"Do you remember, Father…?"

Of course, Bahamut knew this as well. How could he not know that I was trying my best to deny reality? However, he didn't show it. It was probably because he wanted to spend his final moments with me.

[Yes, I remember, Bahamut. Of course I remember… Even though a lot of time passed, I still clearly remember it and the things you said.]

"M-Me, too."

[I remember our stroll… *Ah!* I also remember the deep conversations you and I had.]

It was such a long time that it felt like an eternity. It was difficult for the human memory to remember exactly what happened a few years ago, but for some reason, the time I spent with Bahamut… was still clear in my mind as if it happened just a few days ago.

[T-There was also that time when I almost tripped.]

"*Ha… haha…* you're right. I was so shocked back then. You seemed like a perfectionist, so that was my first time seeing your… clumsy side…"

[B-Back then…]

"I-It happened… a few times. If I didn't catch you…"

[You have a great memory. I-It… would've been nice if you forgot memories like that…]

"How could I? On top of that, there was sword training… *Ke… keke…*"

*'Your sword techniques were dangerous. Was it that funny seeing me struggle?'*

"Seeing you struggle with a sword… *Ha… haha…*"

[I was… actually… doing my best… I-I remember you telling me… I could improve if I do my best…]

"*Ha… haha… kek… haha…*"

[You… lied!]

"I'm… sorry. *Ha… haha…*"

[How could you! Lie to me about that…]

"You just looked… so serious… I-I couldn't tell you the truth."

[You're so mean.]

"Also…"

[Yes?]

"It was a great excuse to make so I could spend more time with you."

[…]

"It was my first time."

[…]

"It was my first time laughing like that in the Underground Temple, and it was the first time I reflected on myself. I've never talked to anyone that long before. It's probably because… *Ugh*… I never had the chance… to look back… b-but it felt like… I was saved. I'm sure that's what it felt like."

[That's…]

"Talking to you…"

[…]

[And laughing while walking with you in the Underground Temple…]

[…]

"Talking about trivial things…"

"Enjoying the social gathering… they were all a first for me. Do you—*haha*… remember it all?"

*'Why do you keep asking if I can still remember those times?'*

I was sure he wanted to talk about many things because it had been a while since we saw each other, but the problem was that they were too detailed. The longer our conversation, the more uncomfortable I felt.

I was trying to focus, but many thoughts popped into my head.

*‘I hope this jerk doesn’t get up all of a sudden saying that he doesn’t want to die.’*

It wasn't likely, but I couldn’t deny the fact that I was anxious.

*‘Come on, let’s move on.’*

[You mean when we ran to the terrace to avoid the boring priests?]

"Yes."

[Of course I remember, Bahamut. I think it’s more like I was helping you get away… I could tell you really wanted to get out.]

"So I’ve been caught red-handed."

[I remember… every single detail, including the moment we were together. Of course… our final moments… as well…]

[…]

[I remember our last moment as well.]

I was trying my best to move on to the last part of the story.

The natural build-up made Bahamut go silent.

Moments later, I heard his soft voice. He seemed to be cautious of his words. I was sure there was a lot he wanted to say, but he couldn’t say them all. He was too ashamed to talk to me about the fact that he had accepted the demon’s seed and got into a contract with a demon.

"I’m sorry for letting you see me like this… Despite remembering… your warning… I…”

[No, I know… I know you had no choice. I-I don’t care what you look like,

Bahamut. Just because you turned your back on the light… and became like this doesn't mean you're not Bahamut.]

"…"

*'So… '*

[I'm sure a lot of things happened and I know it was hard to endure. I know you had no other choice… and it was something that was bound to happen… I know it all. If there's one thing I can say… y-you're still kind… and caring.]

"But…"

[That's not who you are. It was something that wore a mask that resembled you… so…]

"Thank you for saying that, Father…"

[…]

"Thank you… very much for saying that. Thank you for comforting… an idiot like me who does not deserve forgiveness."

Bahamut didn't move, but I could feel him crying.

Was he regretting his decision? No, he didn't regret it because in the end, he defeated the orange demon and got the ending that he wanted.

The Angel of Sacrifice was freed from the demon, and he found peace again.

Although it took a long time and the method was not exactly right, he still overcame the orange demon. In exchange, he had to sacrifice many things.

I was sure… he wasn't regretting it, and perhaps it was just me, but…

*'He looks like he just wants to be comforted.'*

He couldn't be forgiven by everyone… but he wanted to receive the

forgiveness of a certain individual.

"…"

[…]

There was a moment of silence, and Bahamut realized that the end was near.

Of course, the naive Priest of Prophecy was busy talking to Bahamut because it was fun. The fact that I could talk to him like this made me feel happy. I felt like this moment was going to last forever.

"Come to think of it… I remember the story… you told me…"

[What?]

"You said you couldn't see the sky from here…"

[*Ah*, I do remember… saying something like that. You have… a really good memory.]

"You said when you were in the Land of Nejesca, you always looked up at the sky whenever you were done with your work. You said seeing the starry night sky would relieve you of your exhaustion… and doing that became a habit. You said you'd instinctively look at the sky."

[Do you really remember everything?]

"You said… that black ceiling resembled the sky you saw a long time ago."

[Bahamut…]

"Father, what does the sky look like right now?"

*'Is that what he wanted?'*

I talked slowly, describing what I was seeing.

"I… I'm seeing a dark sky."

It was actually an orange sky.

"I see…"

[I'm seeing a really beautiful sky.]

"Is that… right? I see. So it's beautiful."

[It'd be really nice if you could see it with me.]

"*Haha… ha…"*

[The stars are shining… like the sky… you and I saw together…]

"I see…"

[It reminds me of obsidian. The night pearls look like stars… it's vast… and like a midsummer night… It's strange. I-It really…]

"…Yes?"

"Reminds me of the Land of Nejesca."

[…I see…]

[We should go to the Land of Nejesca… together someday…]

"…"

[Of course, the Underground Temple…]

[…]

[Are you listening? It's interesting. The speckles in the sky remind me… of the aurora… but I know that's not what those are…]

[…]

[Come to think of it, Bahamut…]

[…]

[Bahamut?]

[…]

[Baha… mut…]

[…]

[Baha… Bahamut… *Heuk*… Bahamut…]

[…]

[*Heuk… heuuuuk…]*

[…]

[Bahamut…]

Grief belonged to those who were left behind.

It lasted a really, really long time, but it was a mere moment for us.

It was a terribly lonely and sad… summer.

# CHAPTER 1014
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (21)

I heard loud cheers around me, so I opened my eyes.

*'Bahamut, you jerk… Looks like you're finally dead.'*

I wasn't certain, but I had an idea. Why else would they cheer?

"Hyung-nim… Hyung-nim, are you okay?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young."

"Mr. Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young…"

I was in a blur, but I could hear several voices addressing me at once.

*'Uh, my eyes must still be closed.'*

Why was it so dark?

"Please move. I need to check his condition."

I felt like I was dreaming.

*'Am I unconscious?'*

I thought I had some energy left after Bahamut's farewell party, but it seemed that I lost consciousness without realizing it.

*'It's understandable since I've been withstanding it for a long time.'*

It was probably because I was no longer nervous, and all the tension had left me. I had been at my limit a long time ago, and now that I thought about it, I

never had a good night's sleep since I saw that scene through Kasugano Yuno.

*‘I’m sure I have a lot of injuries… ’*

They were treating my injuries using holy power, but repeat injuries would eventually make my body break down. I also awakened as Light Ki-Young, so it was natural for me to be in this condition.

While everyone else was cheering, the leaders of the expedition group and the Blue Guild were wrapping things up. It was highly likely they were taking me to a camp. I couldn’t feel like I was being moved, but I heard loud noises outside.

I could also hear someone crying.

"Hurry up and take him. Hurry!"

"B-But… is it okay to leave him… like this? Just now, he clearly—"

"What?"

"You saw it yourself, didn’t you? F-Father Lee Ki-Young… a-a demon…”

"Shut up," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"What?"

"I told you… to shut up before I break that mouth of yours," Kim Hyun-Sung threatened.

He clearly regained consciousness before me.

*‘But you shouldn’t threaten people like that.’*

"…”

Afterward, I heard Jo Hye-Jin’s voice.

"I’m sure you’re already aware, but everything you saw today is top secret. Forget everything you saw here. It’s also written in the expedition contract, so please keep that in mind."

*‘Yeah, that's what I’m talking about. Our Hye-Jin is doing so well. Hyun-Sung, you shouldn’t make threats like that, man.’*

"B-But…”

"The Blue Guild and the Vatican are aware of your concerns, but right now, it’s hard to make any decisions," Jo Hye-Jin explained.

"Understood."

*‘You need to be nice like her.’*

Jo Hye-Jin's voice was getting farther and farther away.

With a *thud*, I heard Sun Hee-Young and Elena’s voices.

"There’s nothing wrong with his body. *Um…* about the other Mr. Ki-Young…," Elena said.

"As of right now, I don’t feel it. What do you think, Miss Elena?" Sun Hee-Young asked.

"You’re right, Miss Sun Hee-Young. I-I don’t… feel it. He’s just exhausted… so you don’t have to worry too much, Master," Elena replied.

"*Wheeew…* I’m… glad," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

Afterward, I could no longer hear any voices.

It sounded like they were having a serious conversation, but their voices were faint.

It sounded like they were talking slowly as well. Before I fell into another

deep sleep, I started thinking about the commotion I heard earlier.

I didn't think much about it because I was really out of it earlier, but now that I thought about it.

*'It was because of… Light Ki-Young.'*

I knew it was going to be problematic.

*'Damn it. Why did I overdo it?'*

I failed to control my emotions. It was such a desperate situation, so I got really agitated. In the eyes of a third party, however, I definitely looked like someone who had lost his mind.

It was highly likely that I looked like a psycho because I was crying and laughing for no reason.

Actually, some of the field commanders were aware of the reason behind my actions, but who could laugh off the appearance of the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep?

I was sure they thought my unstable mind made me like a ticking bomb. I had a disgusting appearance, and from the point of someone unaware, I had to have treated Kim Hyun-Sung, the world's strongest, as if he were a slave.

*'It's understandable that they'd make a big deal out of it.'*

Jin Cheong did not intentionally disconnect from the channel, so it was clear that he really wanted to see me fail.

"Hyung-nim… are you… okay?"

*'Oh, the pig is here.'*

"Are you sure… you're okay?" Park Deok-Gu asked again.

'I’m fine.'

"I hope I’m not making a fuss… but the situation I thought would never happen again actually happened again. I suddenly feel worried. I don’t know what happened… but hurry up and get up. Fix this. I also have many things I want to hear from you…” Park Deok-Gu said.

*'What do you want to hear?'*

"*Ah*, also, don’t hate Hyun-Sung bro so much. After hearing his side of the story, it sounded like everyone had agreed on it. I know you were trying to take on the difficult task by yourself like always, but you can’t expect us to stand by and do nothing after disappearing like that all of a sudden," Park Deok-Gu complained.

I wanted to keep listening, but I was getting sleepy.

Afterwards, I heard Jo Hye-Jin’s voice.

"Don’t do that again."

*'Do what?'*

"Don’t… Don’t try to do that again, you jerk," Jo Hye-Jin added.

*'What are you talking about?'*

"Do you have any idea how scared I was? Do you know how scary it is… to suddenly lose memories of you… *Heuk… heuuk…!*" Jo Hye-Jin cried.

*'Why is she crying?'*

"Miss Hye-Jin…”

"*Heuk… heuuuk…”*

*'Wait, did you come here with Elias? He's not comforting you right now, is he?'*

"*Heuk…* you jerk. You're the worst person in the world," she said.

"It'll all be fine," Elias said.

*'Elias, you bastard. Don't you dare lay a finger on her, you scum. How dare you approach her at her weakest—'*

*'Ah… I'm sleepy.'*

I heard a voice again.

"Mister… wake up…"

It was Ye-Ri's voice.

"He… didn't die again, did he?" asked Kim Ye-Ri. She seemed to have been traumatized by my death.

"*Kgh… heuk…* He's not dead, right? He's not dead, right?" Kim Ye-Ri questioned.

I was clearly breathing, so why was she acting this way?

What's wrong with them? It hadn't even been a week.

*'Wait, a week? It probably hasn't even been four days.'*

The information I extracted from my visitors allowed me to deduce that the expedition group had yet to retreat.

Bahamut was dead, but the dungeon conquest wasn't over yet.

The Blue Guild and the expedition group couldn't leave this place yet, so they had to have built a tent for me to rest instead of taking me up to the surface.

They had made the right decision. They had to keep an eye on me to deal with the Light Ki-Young incident. It was also better for me to be close to them, so I could deal with anything unexpected.

"I came to report the situation outside in case you're curious, Mr. Lee Ki-Young."

*'I knew I could rely on you, Hee-Young.'*

"…"

"Miss Hee-Young has something to do in the afternoon, so I came in her place, sir."

*'Ki-Mo is here as well.'*

"There's actually something I need to report first… It seemed like Miss Jo Hye-Jin and Mr. Elias has gotten really close recently," Sun Hee-Young reported.

*'What?'*

"I don't think they're dating yet… but I feel like there's something going on between them. She wasn't like this before… but it seems like Miss Jo Hye-Jin has finally become aware of Mr. Elias's presence.

"They've been going on exploration tasks a lot recently. I don't know what they're talking about… but the worst-case scenario you've been worried about might be happening," Sun Hee-Young added.

*'Shit, I knew this was going to happen. That bastard.'*

The next one was Chang-Ryeol.

"As you've mentioned, sir, I've been trying to recruit Colonel Smith. We're still discussing the details of his contract. I think it's best… if you listen to the conditions…" Lee Chang-Ryeol suggested.

They were doing great.

They knew what to do without me telling them what they needed to do.

Since the expedition was on hold for now, everyone started poaching and recruiting people. There was also some trading going on, as the top adventurers of the continent were all here.

I was sure there were people they liked and groups that lined up with their ideals.

We didn't need to follow this trend, but we needed to recruit Colonel Smith.

*'Ah, Captain Sophia isn't so bad, either.'*

It was fun hearing news about what was happening outside from time to time.

"Mr. Ki-Young… I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. *Heuk*…" Kim Hyun-Sung would cry a lot during his visits. Despite being the leader of the expedition, he had been spending too much time here.

"Hyung-nim… today is the fourth day. We've been searching everywhere… but we haven't been able to find anything. Can we even clear this dungeon?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Mr. Deok-Gu, it's time to change shifts."

The pig and Hwang Jung-Yeon were complaining about many things.

"O-O-Oppa… you're mean. T-This… is y-you're fault. I-I did nothing wrong, so you're… the bad guy," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"…"

"Y-You need to be punished… for being bad. Yeah… punished. S-Sora, there's no one outside, right?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

Jung Ha-Yan would come randomly and say ridiculous things about punishing me and that I was the bad guy.

"Darling, when are you going to wake up? It's really boring here. Let's head up soon. Show me your transformation again, you got it?" Cha Hee-Ra said.

"…"

"*Ugh*… this is driving me crazy. I need to hurry and get out of here," Cha Hee-Ra added.

After visiting me once, Hee-Ra noona did not visit me again.

"Can you hear me, Sub Guild Master? Can you hear me? Can you see me or hear me?"

Elena was focused on checking my condition.

Even new guild members visited me often and said ridiculous things. I wasn't sure whether an order to visit was given to the entire guild or not, but I found it entertaining to listen to the rookies.

"*Woof!*" Shiro barked.

"*Ah!* Belier!" Alps greeted.

"Miss Alps. Y-You're already here," Belier said.

"Yes. The others are outside. They said there's no one else who can work beside me… You didn't… get a mission… Miss Belier?" she asked.

How was this not entertaining?

"It's kind of hard… right? Miss Sun Hee-Young… is kind of scary…" Alps asked.

"Miss Kim Ye-Ri… always tells me that I've changed a lot since I joined. I understand what she's saying… but it makes me kind of sad," Belier told her.

"And Miss Yoo Ah-Young is the same," Belier added.

Gossiping about other people was always fun.

The guild members weren’t the only ones who visited me.

"How long are you planning on sleeping, you idiot? Shouldn’t you end this since you started this?" Commander Jin asked. He visited me only once.

"Master… *Heuk*… Master!" Kasugano Yuno visited me once as well.

Since entry to the room was pretty strict, only guild members could enter, except for Jin Cheong, Kasugano Yuno, and Cha Hee-Ra. In addition to them, I heard Ji-Hye noona mumbling something through the communication channel.

Exactly five days later, I finally opened my eyes.

"Y-You need to be punished—O-O-Oppa?"

Jung Ha-Yan hugged me with a shocked face.

"I can’t breathe, Ha-Yan," I told her.

"*Heuk… kgh…* O-O-Oppa… *Kgh…”* Jung Ha-Yan cried.

"I said I can’t breathe," I repeated.

All the guild members soon entered the room, and I couldn’t help but smile at the sight of them.

# CHAPTER 1015
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (22)

*'My babies are here.'*

With a *thump*, Kim Hyun-Sung entered first and stared at me with a blank expression.

What did he want to say to me? I saw him moving his lips, but he remained quiet in the end and just stared at me. His sparkling eyes had changed, and he was filled with many different emotions. The sight alone made me feel bad.

"K-Ki-Young…"

He was choking up. He couldn't finish his sentence because the guild members came in.

"Hyung-nim? Hyung-nim… are you awake? Our hyung-nim is awake! *Keugh*… we were worried about you! How could you do that?!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

"Sub Guild Master!" Jo Hye-Jin shouted.

"How are you feeling?"

*'They're acting as if I've been unconscious for five years.'*

"Hold on, sir…"

"Wait, let me check your condition."

The word "new" was the best way to describe this situation.

I'd hear their voices often, but it had been a really long time since I saw their faces.

Perhaps it was all because I went to the social gathering, but I was so happy to see them that it felt strange.

I was relieved and worried at the same time because everyone seemed a bit too excited, but thanks to Elena and Sun Hee-Young, I managed to avoid getting buried in their hugs.

“Thankfully… you seem fine. It’s true that you still need to rest more… but more importantly, c-can all of you calm down a little? I understand that all of you are happy, but…” Elena said.

The cacophony of voices slowly went silent. It was like they had just figured out the fact that they were standing before a patient.

“Sub Guild Master? How are you feeling?”

Jo Hye-Jin was the first one to talk to me.

After seeing her worried face, I replied, “I-I’m not sure. I don’t feel *that* great… I think I feel the same as usual.”

I was not really happy because of the news I heard about you and Elias.

“I’m glad. You’re. Okay,” Kim Ye-Ri said.

I reached out and patted her head…

“W-What. Are you doing?” Kim Ye-Ri questioned me and pushed my hand away.

*'Just be honest, kid. I heard you bawling.'*

The original members of the Blue Guild and the other members of the Blue Guild either greeted me or tried to report the things that had happened so

far. Of course, they also started asking me a bunch of questions.

It was tiring trying to answer each and every question, but I did it anyway.

I saw Kim Hyun-Sung talking to Alps in the back.

Moments later, I saw Alps bringing in some snacks.

"*Ah*, come to think of it, you haven't eaten anything in five days. B-But this doesn't look enough to fill you up," Park Deok-Gu said.

"Eating any more than this will overwhelm his body. For now—"

"*Ah*, I see," Park Deok-Gu interrupted Jo Hye-Jin.

"You should hurry and eat, sir," Jo Hye-Jin said.

*'I feel so out of it.'*

"O-O-Oppa, do you want me to feed you?" Jung Ha-Yan offered.

I felt like a monkey at a zoo. When I scooped up a spoonful of soup, I was so embarrassed to see everyone looking at me. I couldn't help but feel self-conscious, and honestly, I didn't really have an appetite, as I had just woken up.

In the end, I put the spoon down after just a few spoonfuls of food.

"I-I'm… done—"

"You have to eat," Elena interrupted me.

I really had no appetite.

"You have to eat, Mr. Ki-Young."

"T-Then… I'll take a few more…"

“You have to eat it all, o-o-oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan chimed in.

*‘Damn it.’*

I honestly didn’t want to eat.

*'Do they really have to watch me eat as if I were a three-year-old?'*

I had to say something to change the topic.

After quietly placing the spoon down, I looked at each and every one of them.

“The Bahamut raid… seemed to have ended well,” I said.

“…”

“Did… Templar Gen…” I added.

“Templar Gen… He’s dead,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

“…”

I had to look kind of sad because it was a reality I expected but couldn’t believe.

The guild members had an idea that I cherished Templar Gen, but they didn’t seem really bothered by it.

Actually, they were probably hearing the news of his death. Regardless of the reason behind his actions, it wouldn't change the fact that he had committed the worst crime ever. Templar Gen’s life or death wasn’t important to the guild members who believed I cherished him due to Stockholm Syndrome.

The Blue Guild members cared about me, not Templar Gen.

The atmosphere in the room was strange, so I couldn’t ask any questions about it, but I had an idea based on the flow of the conversation just now.

Just like the time I turned into Doom Ki-Young…

*‘I don’t know what happened.’*

My memories of when I was Light Ki-Young had disappeared completely.

When it was hard to fix things, pretending not to know anything was the best thing to do.

As expected, everyone was surprised. The original members managed to control their expression, but newer members like Alps and Belier were easy to read.

“Can you tell me… what happened… and how the raid went?” I asked.

“I’m writing a report right now, sir. Once it’s ready, I’ll send you the report,” Jo Hye-Jin answered.

*'All right. I needed to focus on recovering anyway, and I’m sure she doesn’t want to talk about things that could give me a headache.'*

“…”

“Additionally, we’re still clearing the raid—”

“I know how to clear the dungeon,” I interrupted her.

“That’s…”

“You won’t understand even if I tell you because it’s something I have to do myself,” I added.

I had to go to where Altanus was locked up and release her from the iron maiden.

“Let’s go,” I said.

“How about resting a little more before moving, Mr. Ki-Young?” Kim Hyun-

Sung suggested.

“I’ve rested enough. I want to head up now,” I answered.

I had too many bad memories here.

That was what I thought as I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung with a sorrowful gaze.

This was possible because I was actually wounded emotionally.

The guild members had no idea what I had gone through in the past, what happened between Bahamut and me, just what kind of individual Draktaris was, and the type of bond Templar Gen and I had built with each other.

In the eyes of other people, this expedition was just a bit more difficult than usual, but this was more than an expedition for me. I had created connections with many people in the distant past, and I lost them in an instant, and so easily at that.

I was sure… I was sure I’d never forget them, and they’d always remain in my heart.

I still couldn’t forget how Templar Gen followed me around while calling me Father.

I still couldn't forget Bahamut’s kindness as well.

“…”

“…”

No one was insensitive enough to point out the suddenly heavy atmosphere.

“Mr. Ki-Young, w-what… on earth… happened there?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“I’ll make sure to tell you once I’m ready, Mr. Hyun-Sung. But… I’m not sure when that will be. I want to get out of here for now, so please… stand,” I told

him.

I couldn't hear any answers, nor did I ask for any more opinions.

No one would be able to say anything else since I was feeling so depressed to the extent that I wanted to get out of here as soon as possible.

It was such an overwhelming atmosphere that no one could even suggest having a meal today. As someone who had looked into the Underground Temple's past, my eyes were filled with a hodgepodge of complicated emotions.

*'It's kind of hard to move.'*

I had to change my clothes.

"Can you summon the priests of the temple for me? I think it's best if I change into my formal outfit," I requested.

"…"

"…"

"Yes, sir," Jo Hye-Jin answered.

"*Ah*, I want you to stay behind Miss Hye-Jin. There's something I want to discuss with you," I ordered.

"Okay."

The guild members understood what I was trying to say and left the room one by one.

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed dissatisfied, but he didn't say anything. He bowed quietly and left.

Jung Ha-Yan seemed like she was sending me signals, so after signaling her to

come closer, I hugged her tight. She seemed to be feeling relieved because she did not kick up a fuss and left the room quietly.

Soon, the priests of the temple entered with my uniform. Normally, they'd help me get dressed, but they left the room quietly after giving them a signal. I started changing into my formal clothes, but…

*'It's hard to get dressed alone.'*

"Hye-Jin, help me with this. Tie the back, help me with the sleeves, and put on any accessory," I instructed her.

I decided to make Hye-Jin take care of the rest.

"…"

"You know how to do it, right?" I asked.

"I do," Jo Hye-Jin answered.

"…"

"…"

"Are you upset?" I asked.

"Why would I be upset?" Jo Hye-Jin questioned.

"So you are upset," I argued.

"…"

"You look angry." I pointed out.

"…"

"It's pretty obvious," I said.

“…”

“You’re clearly angry,” I said.

“That’s enough,” Jo Hye-Jin mumbled.

“You’re angry,” I said.

“…”

“Just say that you’re angry,” I teased her.

“That’s right, you jerk. While we’re on the subject, let me ask you something. What the hell were you thinking?” Jo Hye-Jin questioned.

“…”

“…”

“It won’t happen again,” I reassured her.

“I-I should’ve just stayed quiet,” Jo Hye-Jin stuttered.

An awkward silence filled the room.

Jo Hye-Jin, who was kneeling to help me with my outfit, started sobbing.

Her faint sobs sounded really sad.

*‘Yeah, she* did *suffer a lot.’*

I was sure it was the same for the others, but Jo Hye-Jin was the type to hold it all in, so it seemed like all of her emotions had just exploded at once.

Just like the time I heard her talk while I was "asleep," the fear of losing memories of me was traumatic for her. If I were in her shoes, I'd also be scared to know that I was losing memories of one person.

*'I'm sure she was really scared since she's really fond of me.'*

I wouldn't be surprised if she needed someone to lean on, but the problem was that she relied on Elias.

"Are you crying, Hye-Jin?" I asked.

"Shut up," Jo Hye-Jin mumbled.

"Are you crying?" I repeated.

"You jerk. I'm not crying. *Heuk… heuuuk…"* Jo Hye-Jin sobbed.

"Hye-Jin."

It was a bit sudden, but I needed to say it now to get her to stop crying.

"…"

"You can't be with Elias. Not on my watch," I told her.

"What?"

"I don't approve of that old elf," I said.

"…"

"He's—"

"H-How did you know?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"Did you agree to go out with him?" I questioned.

"No, it's not like that… It's just… W-What does that have to do with you? Actually, I don't know how you found out… but we're not dating… we're more than friends but not lovers… I decided to give it a chance.

"Dating and marriage won't happen anytime soon… we're just… no, it's not

even that… We're just getting to know each other…" Jo Hye-Jin explained.

*'She really doesn't know how scary elves can get. Damn it. What if he's a person who just really likes humans? What are you going to do once you see his true colors?'*

Jo Hye-Jin was still innocent. She was so innocent that she didn't know how the world worked. Elias was trying to crawl into her world by taking advantage of that weakness.

Actually, I wouldn't stop her if she truly wanted to date someone, but they had to pass my personality test, at the very least.

My personality test was simple.

I would surely be able to see the purity of his love for Jo Hye-Jin by stumbling upon him as Lee Ki-Yeon. I was sure that guys like him would fall for me in just three days. It'd take only three days to seduce him and about a month for us to hold an engagement ceremony.

In other words, all I needed was one month.

# CHAPTER 1016
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (23)

“I don’t approve of him,” I said.

“W-What makes you think you have the right to say that?” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“Hye-Jin, do you know how old he is?” I questioned.

“He’s an elf… so he’s…”

“The problem isn’t that he’s old *because* he’s an elf. The problem is that he’s been alone for that long. The dating market doesn’t lie. No one has ever purchased him since he was put up for sale, and it's all because there's something wrong with him. And he’s been in that state for hundreds of years,” I explained.

“…”

“Objectively speaking, the guy doesn’t look bad. He's not as handsome as Hyun-Sung, but he doesn’t look so bad. But Hye-Jin. That’s why it’s even more suspicious. Even the kingdom is begging him to get married.

"Have you considered the possibility that maybe there’s something wrong with him, and that’s why he’s been on the market for so long? Why would a man with power, a nice face, and a good background still remain single for such a long time?” I questioned.

Of course, there could have been unavoidable and special circumstances, but my instincts were telling me that it wasn't the case for Elias. I was definitely judging the situation objectively here.

Just as I expected, Jo Hye-Jin had no choice but to remain quiet. She couldn’t help but question why he was on the dating market for so long and how

someone as perfect as him was being neglected for so long.

*'It's because he's scum. He might be a notorious playboy in the Elf Kingdom.'*

I finished changing clothes, and Jo Hye-Jin started rambling on.

"Anyway, let's talk more about this later," I suggested.

"Y-Yeah. That's a good idea. O-Of course, I'm not trying to have a serious conversation about this. I'm too busy to be dating… and when I was back on Earth, I dated so many people. It's funny to even be obsessed with it now… I was just asking for your opinion…" she rambled on.

*'Yes, yes, I know, Hye-Jin. I'm sure you were popular at your school for a reason.'*

If Elias were to pass all the tests, I would consider it, but for now, I couldn't approve of him.

I had some plans related to that, but I could only proceed with them once we were done here. Things unrelated to the plan could come up if I were to refrain from executing the plan until then, so there was no need for me to think about it for now, but…

*'Hye-Jin is special. If I ask Ji-Hye noona for help, I'm sure she'll come up with a great story.'*

Jo Hye-Jin and I started walking away while talking to each other.

*'This is more important right now.'*

"So, how do you clear the dungeon? Is this uniform necessary?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"It's like a religious ceremony. It also means that I'm meeting someone formally…" I answered.

*'People's perspective changes a lot depending on how people look at me.'*

I also needed to wash away the image Light Ki-Young had damaged.

The dungeon would be cleared as soon as I opened the iron maiden.

It was a simple action, but I didn't want to miss out on an important event like this.

This was the first time an unranked dungeon was cleared, and it was a victory for the continent as well as for the expedition members. Everyone here had basically accomplished a mythical achievement.

There had to be a story about this, and the story would be passed down from generation to generation, so it needed an ending that would fit that legendary story.

"No matter what happens, don't come close," I warned her.

"What?"

"It's nothing big, so don't worry… I'm just telling you to watch what I do," I told her.

I walked barefoot. The news about how the dungeon would soon be cleared had to have spread like wildfire, as the majority of the expedition members were already outside.

I wouldn't be surprised if they started cheering, but they remained quiet.

It was all because of the mood…

The honorary cardinal of the continent and the incarnation of light looked extremely solemn, so everyone stayed quiet. They felt like they were witnessing a religious ceremony, so they dared not speak and simply stared at the sidelines.

The entire Blue Guild wasn't any different. Jo Hye-Jin had conveyed my message to everyone, but I was sure that wasn't the only reason they were

silent. It would be more fitting to say that the atmosphere had overwhelmed them.

The others were here as well. The higher-ups who had witnessed the descent of the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep were staring at me anxiously. Was it because they had witnessed a sight that they couldn't believe, even though they had seen it with their own eyes?

However, the confused and fearful gleam in their eyes soon changed. I looked unstable as I walked, and everyone could tell that I was exhausted. I was having a hard time walking, which was in stark contrast to the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep.

When I stumbled, some of them flinched.

*'They were pitying me.'*

Rather than fear, they felt bad for the pitiful human who represented the words "sacrifice" and "holiness."

They thought my fate was cruel and that my role was too difficult.

They had all seen the hardships I had to go through in the past, but there were still stories and epic adventures unknown to them. This was not enough to make people stop being suspicious of Light Ki-Young, but emotions were affecting some people.

"O Benigoa!"

"O Saint of Sacrifice and Light…!"

"O Son of Light!"

The chanting of those titles signaled the start of the ceremony.

*'The pilgrim of penance.'*

I took a step outside of the camp and instantly felt a burning pain under my feet.

There were many stone fragments stuck to the soles of my feet, and it couldn't be helped, as the dungeon was basically in ruins. There were glass shards, broken marble, sharp weapon fragments, and debris from the buildings.

My feet were in burning pain.

"*Ah…*"

"*Ahhh…*"

*'Shit, it really hurts.'*

It hurt so much I wanted to shed a tear—no, it was so painful that I wanted to cry out, but I couldn't stop moving here.

Naturally, I heard groans everywhere, but I was more worried about the reaction of the Blue Guild members. Kim Hyun-Sung gnashed his teeth while Jung Ha-Yan and Park Deok-Gu looked at me anxiously. To add to this, Belier, the new guild member, was angry, and her face turned red from the fury.

My holy blood dripping to the ground surely wasn't a pretty sight.

*'Damn it, damn it, damn it… '*

Tears welled up in my eyes without realizing it, but I didn't bother holding back my tears, as this was the perfect time to start crying.

*'No one would think that these are tears of pain.'*

I was definitely crying for the people who died here and for the people in pain. The priests didn't stay still. They formed their own line and volunteered to be extras for the honorary cardinal's ceremony.

*‘Yeah, that’s right. That’s how you do it.’*

The priests unleashed their holy power while walking behind me, and they raised their voices, singing a hymn for the ceremony. Their devotion was indescribable.

Each verse contained holy power, and the Underground Temple became filled with their sincerity and wishes. Some of the religious believers and adventurers lowered their heads and kneeled to show respect to the god who was leaving His footsteps of light on the pilgrim of penance.

But that wasn't the end of it…

*‘What the heck?’*

Spirits of priests manifested from all over the place and walked behind me. The march of penance held in a place sun-kissed by holy light resembled a scene straight out of a legend.

*‘The ones following us are too busy crying.’*

The guild members were dumbfounded by the scene, and the expedition members offered prayers of gratitude for the light. They felt proud that they were walking this path together with me, and they were grateful for witnessing this miraculous sight.

“…”

“…”

*‘Honestly… ’*

I thought of this march as just a way to show off, but I shed more blood as I walked farther and farther away. The ceremony was slowly but surely taking shape, and it was all because of the march, so I thought that it wasn’t so bad.

*‘It depends on how you see it.’*

I was sure Altanus was in more pain than me.

It was impossible for me to sympathize with her pain, even though my feet were being torn apart. However, this was a religious act to console the goddess who had died a miserable death.

I realized that this desolate place was truly her grave.

*'I honestly still don't understand why Benigoa brought me here.'*

It was so incomprehensible that I felt like Benigoa was the *éminence grise*. I seriously felt like she had a wicked plan of backstabbing me to be reborn as the only god in this world.

It was an idea that came naturally to me when I thought about the difficulty and the time dilation in this dungeon.

"O Benigoa…"

"*Ah…!*"

After thinking about it for a bit, I realized that my reasoning wasn't wrong.

The first reason was that this place had become a dungeon, and the second reason was that the history of the past needed the Priest of Prophecy for it to work properly.

Whether it was intentional or not, Benigoa had to have realized that instinctively.

If Benigoa was enlightened to even a crumb of Altanus' will and empathized with her, then…

*'She probably wants to comfort her.'*

I was sure she wanted to liberate Altanus personally from the iron maiden and comfort her. After all, Altanus had been in pain for a long time. It was a

reasonable assumption on my end, as it was the most Benigoa-esque thing to do.

*'Of course, I'm sure she's uneasy at the thought that Altanus was her other self.'*

"…"

"…"

I was walking while having many different thoughts. Eventually, the distant destination came into view.

*'What the? Was this path always blocked? It wasn't like this back then.'*

As soon as that thought popped into my head, the wall was destroyed. It was a type of barrier that couldn't be detected using magic or spells. I finally knew why the expedition members hadn't found this space until now.

*'It had been waiting for me.'*

Altanus was waiting for me to open the door.

I looked around quietly and saw the iron maiden standing tall in the ancient ruins.

*'It's been a while.'*

After a short prayer, I extended my hand out toward the iron maiden.

At the moment, I had no other feelings whatsoever. I was kind of worried a skull was going to pop out or something, but what I saw was the same Altanus I saw tens of thousands of years ago.

I finally saw her… with her eyes closed and hands held together.

*Boom!*

A massive pillar of light fell, and everything turned white.

I also felt like I was whisked away to an empty space.

Actually, it wasn't just "felt" I was actually whisked away.

I had no idea if I was whisked away mentally or if I was imagining things, but I knew that my surroundings had changed. The priests performing the ceremony with me, the guild members, and the expedition members were nowhere to be seen.

The only thing I could confirm was that Altanus was before me in this white space.

She opened her mouth slowly, "Y-You scared me. *Uh? Huh?* What's this?! What's going on?! Where am I? *Uh? Huh?*"

"…"

"What's… going on all of a sudden?!"

"…"

"I-It can't be… I'm sorry. I-I'm sorry. I-I'll make sure to pay you back with full interest! So…"

*'Why are you here?'*

"*Huh?* L-Lee Ki-Young?"

The person before me was Benigoa, not Altanus.

# CHAPTER 1017
# YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (24)

*'Why the hell are you here?'*

"I-It's Lee Ki-Young. *Wheeew…* I'm glad. I was really shocked when I opened my eyes and suddenly found myself in a strange place. I thought the higher-ups had come back for me again!"

*'She's really… '*

"We had some trouble becoming independent. I think it was handled, but I still felt uneasy. I don't know about you… but I had a personal debt to take care of… and I recently forgot to pay the interest… A-Anyway, I know it's impossible, so I thought that was why I was suddenly whisked away… I was really surprised to find myself here!"

"…"

"T-That's strange. W-Why was I brought here?"

"It's been a while," I greeted her.

I felt like I had an idea as to why Benigoa was here instead of Altanus.

Actually, it was not just an idea. I was sure of it.

*'It's true.'*

"…"

*'Since Altanus no longer exists.'*

After starting the next life, Altanus disappeared, leaving only her will. It was

a shame considering I thought I had one more chance to talk to Altanus. I never thought about what I would say to her, but I thought we had many things to talk about.

*'There are also many things we need to clear up… '*

And I had a lot of questions for her…

Nothing was clear. There were so many things to talk about that I couldn't decide what to talk about first. Even though she wasn't Altanus, Benigoa could at least answer my questions.

*'I'm sure Altanus had a reason for bringing her here.'*

While confused about why she was here, Benigoa was still making her silly jokes, but I believe Altanus' will was imbued in her, even if it was only for a moment.

"*Ah*, come to think of it, Mr. Bel told me this…"

"…"

"He said he remembers meeting you a long time ago. He even mumbled, "*Hm*… is that what happened?" He looked happy about it."

I had no choice but to look at Benigoa, who was saying strange things. I kept signaling her as if asking if there was something she wanted to tell me, and her energy went down noticeably.

"…"

"*Uh…"*

"…"

"*Uh…* s-so."

Her face was facing me, but her eyes were looking elsewhere. She even turned her gaze away and mumbled while whistling. She was the same Benigoa that I knew.

Just like a puppy that made a mistake and was worried about its owner's reaction, Benigoa became worried about my reaction.

"Weeeell… you were… r-really amazing. T-The dungeon was more difficult than I imagined… *Ugh…"*

"…"

"I-I made a mistake, right? Y-You're not going to abandon me, are you?"

"…"

"I-I'm sorry, Lee Ki-Young. I-I never imagined things would get this difficult. So… I had a feeling that's what I needed to do… b-but you knew it as well! The Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary was already turning into a dungeon.

"If it hadn't turned into a dungeon earlier… w-we would've encountered a bigger threat! The Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary was the main story of this continent, so we eventually needed to take care of it! If we had done nothing, it would've turned into a bomb that would explode one day! A-And the timing was perfect as well…"

"…"

"I know you're angry… b-but I had no other choice. B-Basically, I needed you for this as well. The Priest of Prophecy was needed for you to be here right now. I-I'm sure of it. A-Anyway, I'm sorry that you suffered so much."

"Couldn't you have given me a clue or something?" I asked.

"You know that I couldn't give you a hint! We don't know how the system will react if an admin gets too involved. I needed to consider the possibility that the difficulty would go even higher.

"The reason I did nothing was that it was for your sake. You don't think I'd just put this out without thinking, hoping that you'll take care of it for me, right? D-Do you know how much I've suffered?"

"…"

"O-Of course, I was being greedy and selfish as well. I-I may not be Altanus, but I-I was still curious about the background. Still… *Ahem*…"

"…"

"You're the one who gave me my name."

"You could say that. To be exact, it's Altanus' will that gave you your name…" I corrected her.

"But still…"

"To be honest, I'm not sure if the invitation sent from the past is the right future. I don't know if you became Benigoa because I called you by that name or if you've always been Benigoa. There's no way of knowing whether the past where the Priest of Prophecy has taken root was the original past," I explained.

"No, the result is what's important, Lee Ki-Young. The original past no longer exists. The present is the result of what you created."

*'She's so dense… '*

She seemed like a different person whenever she showed a different way of thinking from humans. She wasn't wrong. The original past, the changed past, and whether the Priest of Prophecy needed to be in the past or not wasn't important.

The result was more important than the useless process.

It wasn't important whether she became Benigoa because I called her by that

name or not. I called her Benigoa when I first met Altanus, and that past had become the present, so only the result mattered.

“So, did I answer your question?” I asked.

"Yeah… and I’m sure Altanus will be able to rest in peace now."

“Did you know you were Altanus?” I asked.

"I’m not Altanus, Lee Ki-Young."

“You know that’s not what I meant, Benigoa,” I said.

"Y-Yeah. I didn’t know at first. I knew Altanus’ will was passed on to me, but I didn’t know that Altanus and I were born from the same roots."

“Really?”

"Yeah. I have no reason to lie. I’m not sure exactly when I realized it… Actually, I didn’t even realize it. It’s safe to say I suspected it. I-It was only until recently… that I realized she and I were born from the same roots."

“How do you feel now? I’m curious as to why you’re here. Do you feel her will right now?” I asked.

"…”

“…”

"*Ah! Ahh!*"

*‘Damn it. I knew this was going to happen.’*

"Yeah, I feel it… It’s faint, but I feel it, Lee Ki-Young."

*‘What would you have done if I hadn’t said anything?’*

I felt a bit angry to see Benigoa nodding and mumbling to herself, but I

decided to just stare at her. After creating a small chair and sitting on it, she started reading Altanus' will.

"*Hm… hm…"* She nodded quietly and mumbled without any emotions. "Altanus…"

“Yeah.”

"Altanus must’ve loved you, Lee Ki-Young."

“What are you…”

"No, no. Maybe it’s not love. Or… *maybe* it is love. Maybe it's both love and hate? No… no. Love is the best way to describe it since there are many forms of love. Love is the best way to describe the emotion that Altanus feels for you."

“…”

"I don’t think she entered the iron maiden because of you, Lee Ki-Young. I think she had an idea of her own fate, and she knew you weren’t trying to sacrifice yourself for her… she must have also felt responsible because that’s how she’s been living her life."

“*Hmm…”*

"Of course, she’s grateful to you, as she had fun thanks to you. Altanus didn’t have many things to be happy about. After entering the iron maiden, the only memory she could recall was the memory she made with you… Yeah… I’m sure of it. Altanus was stuck in the iron maiden for a long time."

If I were in her shoes and entered the iron maiden in her stead, I'd think of the guild members, Yul-Ha, and my friends back on Earth because all of my good memories were with them. If the only memory she could recall was her memory with the Priest of Prophecy, I couldn’t imagine how miserable her life had to have been.

She was a saint who had never seen the sky, and it was prophesied that she'd lose everything the moment she saw the light.

*‘That light must’ve been me.’*

The truth gave me goosebumps.

"As you’ve already predicted, the continent walked the path of destruction after that… and Altanus became the admin of this world after Lucifer. Altanus must’ve wanted to return the fallen continent back to its original state. She didn’t want another sacrifice like her to appear while the continent was recovering slowly."

“Really?” I asked.

"That’s why she started accepting those who were abandoned on Earth."

“So she’s the one who came up with the summoning ceremony,” I said.

"To be exact, it was with Guardian Metel. Altanus knew exactly what she needed to do. She knew how the continent was operating, and she was familiar with its system. How was Altanus able to create such a system when Lucifer didn’t hand over any of that information?

"It’s thanks to the data in the Goddess’ Hand Mirror. The dummy world inside it and the programs were extremely helpful. Guardian Metel didn’t have access to it, but Altanus knew what was stored inside it.

"The traces you left showed what needed to be done in order for the continent to prosper and to head to a brighter future. I think she had decided to accept those abandoned on Earth because of you. That’s probably around when she realized that you were one of the people who were summoned here.

"Altanus must've been curious about you. Despite thinking that she was guided by you and was deceived by you, she was longing for you. Upon your arrival here, looking at you became part of her daily routine.

"She laughed and cried with you. She had fun, was sad, and angry with you. She followed your story for a long time. She hoped more than anyone else that your story wouldn't end… she wanted to meet you… talk to you… and help you even after she disappeared…"

"What about now?" I asked.

"She's enjoying it."

"…" "She said, 'Tell him I said thank you.'"

"…"

"For coming here, for keeping your promise…"

"…"

"For being with her from start to finish."

"…"

"Also…"

"…"

"She said… 'don't be… so scummy.'"

I honestly couldn't understand what was going on because I was getting too much information at once, and I was having trouble organizing them. I still had questions, but when I saw her dispersing, I started doing what I had to do.

"*Uh…* my time must be up. I-It's too short," Benigoa remarked.

"…"

"*Ack…* W-What the heck? I'm not dying, right? I-I'm just disappearing from this place, right?"

“…”

"L-Lee Ki-Young! I-I’m disappearing! I’m going away. *Heuuuung…* Lee Ki-Young! Help me! H-Help… me."

*‘It’s not like that.’*

It was embarrassing to say this to Benigoa, but I had to say it even though I wasn’t sure whether she wanted to hear it or not.

"Lee Ki-Young! Lee Ki-Young!"

“…”

“Thanks, Altanus.”

"*Uh…”*

“Thank you, Altanus.”

My surroundings changed once again.

[You have completed the raid of the Unranked Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary.]

Altanus’ wounded figure crumbled like sand.

# CHAPTER 1018
# CLEANUP (1)

I was sure it looked like a radiant and holy beam of light had descended before the eyes of everyone else. Of course, the onlookers couldn't hear my conversation with Benigoa, but I was sure they could see the light and her body crumbling with the light.

Obviously, I thought this would help me improve my image as Light Ki-Young even just a little bit.

This was proof of the fact that even though darkness had enveloped me briefly, I was still loved by the light and that I was *still* with the light. Of course, the unfortunate incident of the Light Ki-Young incident being leaked wouldn't happen due to the expedition team's confidentiality contract, but it would not hurt to be careful.

*'I worked hard to maintain this image… '*

Anyway, it was an undeniable fact that I needed to take care of this soon. I couldn't say that all the higher-ups in the expedition were suspicious, so I had to hold an event, regardless of whether it was big or small.

*'Whoo… '*

Anyway, the expedition was a success, and we cleared all the events.

There were many casualties, but compared to what the strategy support team had predicted, the casualties weren't *that* many. More importantly, the dungeon dropped treasures and items worthy of its reputation of being an unranked dungeon.

Naturally, everyone cheered at the dungeon clear.

The priests cried because of the decent ending, and the Vatican declared the Underground Temple a holy site. At the same time, theologists were dispatched to research the legends of Benigoa and Altanus.

Of course, they would not be able to obtain a lot of information, but their discovery would soon be presented to the world along with what they'd find in the existing doctrines.

Priests and theologists weren't the only ones who were happy.

The fame and honor of participating in the expedition boosted the adventurers' self-esteem, and as if to boost their self-esteem even more, people all over the continent were talking about this expedition.

Adventurers who couldn't participate in the expedition waited for the expedition logs to be released as soon as possible, and minstrels were singing of the expedition everywhere.

I was sure that people everywhere were talking about this expedition.

It was a hot topic talked about by people in shabby pubs, high-end salons, adventurer guilds, the Magic Tower, and religious communities. The media outlets released different articles each time as if to live up to their expectations.

Stories about the Sunset Swordsman and named adventurers were what people were most interested in, but what they talked about the most was the overall timeline of the dungeon raid and the relatively unknown heroes.

They couldn't talk about me, who had traveled to the past. They also couldn't talk about Light Ki-Young or Templar Gen, who had been of tremendous help, so they decided to dispense only the minimum amount of information.

Many became suspicious of their actions, but just as the public was getting thirsty for new information, the hero finally appeared.

[Colonel Smith, the Hidden Hero of the Expedition. He Eventually Joins the

Blue Guild… Detailed Contract Details Are Top Secret - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report]

[About the Role Colonel Smith Played in the Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary - Dungeon Columnist Kim Sung-Kyeong]

[A Recruitment Battle Over Colonel Smith? Blue Guild Wins. The Honorary Cardinal Persuasion Was the Deciding Factor… - Reporter Kang Yoo-Mi of Lindel Politics]

It was undeniable that the Blue Guild had profited the most.

Colonel Smith was the type who preferred to remain incognito, so I was sure that he was having a hard time under all of this attention, but I was going to train him to become the press secretary anyway, so it wouldn't be so bad for him to talk in interviews.

*'I need to use him as much as I can, and it's not like the press is only interested in him… It'll be problematic if he's already tired of this much attention.'*

The main characters of the expedition became even more famous, but everyone was mostly interested in the reward we had received from the expedition. In addition to the treasures, money, artifacts containing religious symbols, and a few items that were given to some of the higher-ups to increase their stats, the storage was filled with many different items.

Now that the hard part was over, it was natural to receive rewards, so the expedition group and people who had nothing to do with the expedition group were really interested in the rewards.

As always, the biggest issue was the distribution.

There would be a conflict if we were to use the methods that small parties used to distribute loot, which was either rolling a die or distributing items based on contribution.

The participants of the expedition were all powerful people from their own

region, and there were also politicians who were tired of power struggles.

There was a basic contribution system, but we couldn't solely rely on that. The settlement program prepared by the expedition group was useful, but we couldn't rely on that alone.

There were several groups holding meetings and discussions several times a day, and there were even guilds that tried to increase their contribution through political trade, conspiracies, and using the press.

People could also demand certain items with the condition of keeping quiet about the Light Ki-Young incident.

A sword fight almost broke out in a meeting room because of a single item.

We needed a mediator capable of controlling them before the situation could get worse. Of course, that mediator was none other than me, the only light and hope of the continent, the honorary cardinal, son of Benigoa, and the God of Sacrifice and Revival.

*"That's right. We need you right now. Why have you been so quiet recently? Get a hold of yourself."*

"I don't know, Ji-Hye noona. I must be tired. I can't really pinpoint anything and talk about it. You could say I'm feeling kind of empty," I said.

*"You said the conversation with Benigoa went well."*

"Actually, it's more like I'm feeling restless," I corrected myself.

*"Because of Altanus?"*

"Well, you could say that's been affecting me as well… How's the situation outside?" I asked.

*"Everyone is waiting for you, but they can't say much because they were told that you were resting. Everyone is waiting for you to come out. You just don't*

*understand their feelings because the Blue Guild's storage is filled with Legendary items.*

*"Legendary items are extremely hard to come by, and you may not even stumble upon one in your entire life. That's why the expedition group is still in the capital. They may not be saying anything, but they're all on edge because of the item distribution."*

"…"

*"You heard about the sword fight that almost broke out, right?"*

"I heard," I answered.

*"If you're not going to work, then you shouldn't have started it. You shouldn't have given the items to Colonel Smith and his troops before anyone else."*

"That was part of the contract. Also, do you have something against Colonel Smith? He's the hidden hero of the expedition group…" I asked.

*"You have to consider the thoughts of other people. You must be burnt out."*

"I'm not burnt out…" I said.

It was probably because I had experienced too many things within a short amount of time. It could also be because of Templar Gen… or Altanus. Otherwise, it could be a side effect of going to the distant past.

I had a lot on my mind.

Normally, I'd get rid of any annoying thoughts, but I couldn't do it this time for some reason.

*'Altanus… '*

My story with her had ended. After entering *that* place, I spent some time with Benigoa. Despite that, I still had a lot of thoughts. An indescribable

thought led one thought to another, and I couldn't stop thinking what would have happened if I had done it another way.

*'That's what I call restless.'*

I was probably not satisfied with the result.

*'Was there a way to save Altanus?'*

I knew it was impossible because Altanus wasn't one of my people… and Benigoa was more important to me than her. I hadn't done anything for her, nor had I even considered it.

After all, one of us had to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of the current future.

*'Only the result matters.'*

Benigoa's words filled me up with many indescribable thoughts…

"Well, since you're resting, you can keep resting. I'm sure that three days later, you'll force yourself to push the bad thoughts into the back of your mind and pretend like nothing is wrong."

"But If you keep living that way, I'm worried that you'll actually turn into a psychopath. That's why I called you today."

"You should worry about yourself," I said.

"I'm stronger than you."

"You're talking nonsense again," I told her.

"Accepting that you can't find the answer and pushing it aside are two different things. I'm the type to accept it while you simply push it aside. That's what I meant.

"Anyway, there's something I want to show you. I'm sure it'll be helpful. Kim Hyun-Sung is going to visit soon, right? Visit me after that's over. I have an entertaining video to show you."

"All right, fine," I said.

As soon as Ji-Hye noona ended the call, the doorknob rattled.

"Mr. Ki-Young."

I already knew the identity of the individual on the other side of the door, and it was all because that guy would always come here with food whenever it was time to eat.

I wanted to turn my attention and welcome Kim Hyun-Sung, but I couldn't do that, as I was still in character. I had to act like I was sad about losing Templar Gen, so I had no choice but to look out the window. However, there were no windows here.

Instead, I saw the scenery on a Goddess' Mirror.

"Mr. Ki-Young?" Kim Hyun-Sung called out.

"…"

"Mr. Ki-Young," he repeated.

"*Ah…*"

"It's time to eat," he said.

"You don't need to come every time, Mr. Hyun-Sung… Isn't it time for you to work?" I questioned.

"The guild members were busy, so I came instead," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

*'Busy, my ass.'*

The rumor that I was living a secluded life because I was sad about losing Templar Gen was starting to spread within the Blue Guild.

I wasn't sure whether it was because of that, but the guild members' reactions were mixed. It was fine that I was in my room doing basically nothing, but they were worried about me due to the fact that I looked really depressed.

Among them, Kim Hyun-Sung was the worst.

*'He looks worried… but he seems to like it as well.'*

"How are you feeling today?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I'm feeling better, thanks to you," I replied.

*'How many times are you going to change the flowers in one day?'*

After placing the tray of food on the overbed table, he changed the flowers in the glass bottle.

*'Oh, it's Mirror Salmon.'*

I was actually craving this, but it'd be strange to eat this now.

"I don't have an appetite," I said.

"You should try to get your energy back," Kim Hyun-Sung argued.

"I do, but…"

"I know you have a lot of things to think about, Mr. Ki-Young. Let me know once you're ready, but… take your time," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

I was really hungry, so I decided to take a few bites.

When I grabbed the pair of chopsticks, Kim Hyun-Sung picked up a chair and placed it near me. He seemed happy about me grabbing the chopsticks. It

was understandable since I had been sending the food away. He probably thought that I was ready to talk.

"How's the cleanup going?" I asked.

"It's going well," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

*'Yeah, right.'*

"There seems to be a lot of conflict… but everyone understands what's going on, and they are waiting patiently," Kim Hyun-Sung added.

"I'm glad to hear that," I said.

"…"

"…" "Excuse me, Mr. Ki-Young."

"Yes?"

"About the incident with Templar Gen…" Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry… about that," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*'Don't bring up such a heavy topic all of a sudden while I'm eating. Damn it, he really is bad at talking.'*

"But, Mr. Ki-Young. As you already know—"

"I already know," I interrupted him.

"What?"

"I know he didn't do the right thing, and I know I wasn't rational when it came to Templar Gen, but…" I paused.

"Yes, Mr. Ki-Young?"

"I can't help but keep thinking about it," I continued.

"…"

"It's probably because…" I paused again.

"Yes?"

"He resembled my friend," I added.

And that was when Kim Hyun-Sung's expression changed…

"Your… friend?" he asked.

"Yes, back on Earth…" I answered.

"I… see… You had… a friend… back on Earth," Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"…"

"Your friend…"

Kim Hyun-Sung never really had a friend, so this had to be shocking news in his ears.

# CHAPTER 1019
# CLEANUP (2)

*'Geez… '*

When I thought about it carefully, it wasn't really that surprising.

Just like how he had a life on this continent, he also had a life back on Earth. I was sure everyone else, like us, had a life on Earth as well. Of course, it was different for Kim Hyun-Sung because his life on Earth was something that happened ages ago.

He had lived twice as long as other people and had experienced special incidents as well. It was highly likely that his memories back on Earth had already faded away and that he felt more comfortable living here than on Earth.

Considering the fact that there were still many people missing Earth, he wasn't in the most ideal situation. His way of thinking was more useful here than on Earth, and to be honest, he was more of a denizen of this continent than of Earth.

I was sure he was shocked because he suddenly remembered that he had a life back on Earth. That was also the reason he rarely talked about his life, but he was completely different from Jung Ha-Yan, who wanted to forget that place completely.

Jung Ha-Yan was intentionally avoiding any conversations about her life on Earth, but Kim Hyun-Sung was different, as he couldn't remember anything about his life on Earth.

If Kim Hyun-Sung really was the young master of a rich family, then the incidents that he had encountered so far on the continent had to have shaken

him up greatly. Of course, I simply assumed that he was a young master of a rich family.

"I see… So you had a friend back on Earth…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

I was kind of surprised that he repeated his words.

"Of course… you had a friend…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

He couldn't hide his shock at all.

"That… friend of yours…"

"He was a really close friend," I told him.

*'You can say that he was more than just a casual friend. He's a real friend, and our hearts are one.'*

*'He's a friend you never had.'*

I was not sure, but I had an idea about just what kind of person he was back on Earth.

If I were to be a little harsh, I'd say that he was a good-looking but socially awkward loner. He probably had no issues with his family members and had spent a normal but rich life as a student. However, I was sure he had no one he could call a "friend."

He could think of someone as a friend, but it was highly likely the other person didn't think that way. He was probably in a few chat rooms, but the ones he wasn't in were probably more active. It was kind of sad, but that was just the kind of person he was.

I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung had his own problems, but the people around him probably felt disconnected from him.

*'They probably felt like he's living a life different from them.'*

He was tall, innocent, really handsome, and with a great personality, to boot, but I was sure girls were uncomfortable around him. He probably lived an energetic life filled with dreams and hope, like one would normally see in coming-of-age dramas.

He was good at sports, and he looked like he'd be popular around the guys, but he was actually difficult to get along with.

First of all, he was more good-looking than a celebrity, studied hard, and was always smiling. I could imagine him in a sports drink commercial. He'd turn on the faucet and get his hair wet before drinking a beverage.

Then, he'd say, "Guys!" before jumping into the crowd down below.

*'People would believe me if I were to tell them he was from a high school romance comic.'*

People living in a normal family with a normal life probably felt awkward around him. It was only when people became adults that they'd start pushing themselves and others away.

It was pretty obvious how people treated him at the thought that he was different from them.

*'They only got close to him because they could profit from him; they never really opened their hearts to him. That must be why he's obsessed with me.'*

Having someone he could talk to was precious to him. His relationship with other people was on the surface level, so he definitely felt uncomfortable at the fact that I had another friend aside from him.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't a child, so he couldn't say things like, "Why are you only playing with him? Why are you playing with him and not with me? Why are you closer to him than me?"

He wasn't exactly saying those things, but he looked at me nervously.

"Did you not have any?" I asked.

"*Ah*… well… I-I also had a friend…" Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

"…"

"…"

"It was a thought I had later. At first, I—"

"W-What kind of person was that friend of yours?"

*'Why is he interrupting me?'*

"He was a nice and kind-hearted person… but more importantly, we hit it off pretty well. I was suddenly reminded of him. It only seemed like yesterday when we talked while looking at the clear, blue sky… Perhaps it's because I've only been looking forward or because of that Templar, but I'm having many different thoughts," I answered.

He resembled Templar Gen because he was rich. He also had no qualms about spending a ton of money, and he was a weird loser as well.

"…"

"I know it's useless to do this since there's no way of going back to Earth…" I added.

"*Ah,* right. There's no way to go back…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"And I made a new friend here," I said.

*'Look at him smiling.'*

His smile lasted only for a brief moment, as a part of him was still kind of worried.

*'It's understandable, though.'*

It was only from my point of view that Templar Gen looked like someone who had given everything he had. I was sure he didn't look that way to others. He was seen as a psychopath, and the people had been gaslighting him as well.

In the end, he became known as a scum with a penchant for manipulating people in malicious ways.

Kim Hyun-Sung's bizarre friendship rivalry lasted only for a moment, and it disappeared along with his nervousness. This time, he looked worried.

*'There he goes again.'*

He was imagining my miserable life back on Earth.

"You said he resembled Templar Gen… Was your friend… on Earth…"

"I don't really want to talk about myself. What was it like for you, Mr. Hyun-Sung?" I asked.

"I-I… had a strict mother and a father who cared about his family…" Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"I wasn't asking about that… Please tell me more," I requested.

"My father was a teacher…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Was he a high school teacher?" I asked.

"H-He was a college professor," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

Really?

"My mother ran a small business," Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

"What was the name of her business?" I asked.

"…"

"Tell me," I urged him.

"She sold outdoor gear…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Was it… Hyun-Sung Camping?" I asked.

"H-How… did you know?" Kim Hyun-Sung questioned.

*'It's obvious since it's your name and how can you call that a small business?'*

It was a mid-sized company in Korea, but it was pretty famous.

He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, so we could've been friends back on Earth.

"So you were rich," I commented.

"No, I wouldn't say I was rich," Kim Hyun-Sung denied.

*'No, you were rich. You probably feel that way because your parents lived a simple life.'*

"And you're an only child?" I asked.

"Yes, I am," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

"Your parents sound like great people… Come to think of it, I don't think I ever heard you talk about your life on Earth," I said.

"*Ah!* That's…"

"Yes?"

"When I first arrived here, I cried often… and missed my mom… I mean, my mother and father… but my memories of them were fading away bit by bit the more time I spent here. I feel bad, but many things happened.

"Of course, that doesn't mean that I don't think about them at all. There are

times when I think about them, but strangely, I don't get sad. I don't know if I've become strange or if I've already come to terms with it," Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

"…"

"I'm careful, but… even I can feel that I've become a broken human… I miss them even now, but I don't shed any tears. All I want is for them to live well… and not be sad because of me," Kim Hyun-Sung added.

"…"

"I'm sure it's different for you. It hasn't been that long since you arrived here, so missing Earth…"

*'No, I don't really miss it.'*

*'I do think about Yul-Ha from time to time… but I don't miss Earth itself. I'm sure Yul-Ha is doing fine without me—no, I'm sure she's doing better without me.'*

Of course, if I were asked whether I missed her or not, I'd say that I missed her, but I had a lot on my plate right now. At this rate, I was sure I'd be able to find a way to send some news to her someday.

"That's not true, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I don't think you're broken at all," I told him.

"I appreciate you saying that," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I'm telling the truth… Humans are known to be forgetful. If that much time has already passed, then it's natural for you to forget them. Since you haven't lost your humanity despite experiencing so many incidents, I think you're the most 'human' person ever," I said.

"Thank… you," Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"If you have any fun experiences, can you—"

"I honestly don't remember much. One thing I can remember is—*Ah!* I go camping every weekend with my family," Kim Hyun-Sung answered, interrupting me.

"Really?"

"Yes, I traveled all over the place… Come to think of it, my father always made curry rice whenever we went camping. I don't really remember the taste, but I sometimes remember asking him to make me that dish whenever he tries to cook a different dish.

"My mother likes taking pictures… I honestly didn't like taking pictures, so I avoided her," Kim Hyun-Sung Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"*Haha.*"

I wasn't sure whether it was because of my reaction or because I was showing interest, but Kim Hyun-Sung seemed to be enjoying our conversation.

"If I had known that this was going to happen, I would've taken more pictures… We camped out by a lake once…"

*'He's talking a lot, but at least he's having fun.'*

He told me many things without me asking for it.

In no time, he became immersed in his stories.

"You're right," I said.

"Also…"

Of course, I was enjoying this time as well, and it actually helped lighten the depressing atmosphere. Perhaps it was because Kim Hyun-Sung was expressing his feelings, but it felt like I was immersed in his memories with him.

I got a glimpse of what he felt at the time.

He thought he had forgotten joy, happiness, and warmth, but it didn't seem to be the case.

"We should pick a day and go camping. We can also eat curry rice," I suggested.

*'I'm not sure if we'll be able to get similar spices here, though… '*

"Really?" he asked.

"Yes, really. After all of this is over, of course," I clarified.

"Are you really…”

"Yes, let's go camping. It's been a while since we've taken our griffons outside… We should invite the guild members… and our acquaintances. I was actually thinking that we needed a break," I told him.

"Okay, then we should hurry and figure out the distribution issue…”

"No, I think it's better if I take care of that," I suggested.

*'There's a chance of him causing trouble, so it's better if I just do it myself.'*

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded.

It was really late. I was sure he wanted to spend more time, but unfortunately, I didn't have time to spare.

*'I'll take a look at what Ji-Hye noona has sent over to me and go to sleep.'*

I needed to get back to work tomorrow.

*'I need to work hard from tomorrow onward.'*

I sprawled out on the bed and checked the video that she sent.

Eventually, I entered the communication channel.

"Miss Kim Mi-Young, I know it's late, but please call for a meeting," I requested.

*"Ah… Sub… Guild Master… I'm sorry. Right now…"*

"Looks like I woke you up. Then… I'll contact the person on duty today…" I said.

*"No, I'll take care of it, sir."*

"The meeting will take place in one hour," I informed her.

*"Yes, sir."*

Her voice sounded clearer, so I assumed she was fully awake.

It was 1:48 a.m.

I felt bad for those who were sleeping, but what could they do about it?

*'They have to respond to my summons.'*

I wasn't the one who was in a hurry, after all.

# CHAPTER 1020
# CLEANUP (3)

It only took a moment for the dark city to light up.

At first, several free cities, including Lindel, were active even at dawn to the point that people called them "cities that never sleep."

Of course, the situation couldn't be completely the same as Earth, as there were many adventurers waking up early in the morning.

During night time, however, Lindel was drastically different compared to the other cities, so it was easy for anyone to get confused. The situation in the capital of the Sacred Democratic Country was even more extreme.

The capital city, which was close to the Vatican, had a high percentage of priests and was the home to public officials who handled minor and major affairs of the Sacred Democratic Country. In fact, except for some of the areas, the city was so quiet that people would think that there was a curfew.

Of course, this didn't apply to places like the pub or the night market, but it was an undeniable fact that the city suddenly became busy.

The sight of so many talented adventurers showing up all at once could be a confusing sight. I looked around using my telescope and nodded. A certain guild operating in the capital caught my attention, as I heard that they had a pretty organized system…

"Damn it… I'm happy that things ended up working out but holding a meeting late at night. He's being ridiculous by telling us to come to the Blue Guild at three in the morning," Director Kim complained.

*'You jerk. I've memorized your face and name.'*

“Hey, tell Manager Kim to come here,” Director Kim ordered.

“Yes, sir.”

“Manager Kim, did you prepare all the documents?” Director Kim asked.

“I-I’m sorry. I’m preparing them right now,” Manager Kim answered.

“What?”

“I-I’m—”

“Damn it. Are you even doing your job? Didn’t you hear me tell you to prepare them just in case?” Director Kim complained.

“I’m sorry,” Manager Kim replied.

“Will your apology do anything? *Huh?* Shit! Just tell them to bring me some clothes to wear. The meeting is at three in the morning. If I’m late, you better be prepared to write an apology letter and be punished. Got it? No, you better be happy. If things go wrong, I really won’t just stand by and watch,” Director Kim continued.

“…”

“Did you hear me or not, you bastard?!” Director Kim shouted.

“I understand. I’ll take full responsibility,” Manager Kim said.

Manager Kim ran out of the room amidst Director Kim's harsh words.

“Tell Manager Jung and Chief Kwak to come here,” he ordered.

“…”

“Damn it! How are you two handling things here?! Do you think your work is done once you’ve completed all your tasks? You think you can just go out and have a drink once the day is over?

"Since when did the guild operate like that? Either work overtime or don't sleep at all. Shouldn't you try to finish your tasks as quickly as possible?!" Director Kim complained.

"I'm… sorry, Director Kim."

"Wake up the staff and tell them to get ready. Damn it, damn it!" Director Kim ordered.

What happened afterward was pretty obvious.

"Mr. Lee! Mr. Park! Where is everyone?!" Director Kim yelled.

*'Of course, I naturally thought that I caused trouble.'*

No, that guild was just a bit special. Anyone could tell that it was a black guild.

I had to look at the other guilds.

"*Whoo…* let's hurry and get ready. I know he's an unpredictable person… but this is kind of shocking."

"We must file a formal complaint, Master. Our guild and other groups aren't guilds subcontracted under the Blue Guild. They are clearly looking down on us. How can they suddenly summon us so early in the morning with a single phone call… I know the Blue Guild is a powerful guild, but—"

"That's enough. I'm sure Father Lee Ki-Young had no choice."

*'At least he has a brain, but those under him need to be educated.'*

I looked away and saw a familiar face. It was the face of Mist Summoner Cheon Kwan-Wi. It seemed that the guy whose roots were in the free city of Dawan was staying in the capital as well.

"Mr. Cheon Kwan-Wi, this is—"

“I’m heading to the Blue Guild right now. Make sure to inform the other guild members so that they will not speak inappropriately about this,” Cheon Kwan-Wi ordered.

His words were short and straight to the point.

I knew he knew about me, but I liked his attitude.

He was convinced that my eyes and ears were everywhere.

I wasn’t Big Brother from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or a tyrant, so I couldn’t understand why he was being so careful, but I really felt like giving him more items upon seeing him act without any complaints.

*‘I’ll take care of you.’*

Except for a few people, it wasn’t all that different from the first guild.

Some were angry, saying that their guild was being looked down on, while others followed the order without any complaints. However, the ones who were in the most pain were the staffers and the guild members working under the leader.

It seemed that some of them had failed to bring with them inappropriate clothes, as I saw them use the warp gate.

It was just a simple meeting, but I was sure they were aware of the fact that I was in the middle of recovering, so some were wandering around the city buying gifts for me. The others decided to contact the shop owners themselves, as the majority of the shops were closed.

The press, who were out to get the scoop, was outside, and the guilds that had yet to complete their expedition report, were stuck to their desks. The entire city was moving busily as if the sun had already risen.

*‘Why cause all this trouble by waking up those who were sleeping?’*

There were many black guilds among them.

And that was when I heard knocking on the door…

“Sir, it’s Kim Mi-Young.”

“Okay. I’ll head out right now,” I replied.

“I’ll take you to the meeting room,” Kim Mi-Young offered.

“Okay.”

The problem was that the Blue Guild was brightly lit up as well, and people were moving busily. Some were getting ready to welcome the guests. When I walked past the office, I saw the staffers working on their tasks.

“Actually…” Miss Kim Mi-Young muttered.

“Yes?”

“I was going to take care of the matter quietly with Mr. Park Joong-Ki, but…” Miss Kim Mi-Young paused.

“Yes, Miss Kim Mi-Young?” I said, urging her to continue.

“It seems like he told some of the staffers,” Miss Kim Mi-Young continued.

“*Oh*, really? *Ah*, I wish he didn’t do that…” I said.

“The staffers said that they wanted to help out, so I'm sure they heard about this from him. From the people who had a group dinner until late to the people sleeping in their rooms… everyone returned to the guild to work.

"The news must’ve also reached the members living far away… because they came to work as well. Some even said we don’t have to pay them overtime…” Miss Kim Mi-Young explained.

“No! We shouldn’t do that. Even if they said that… I feel bad that they came to

work…” I said.

“I knew you were going to say that, so I’m thinking about giving a bonus to all the staff,” Miss Kim Mi-Young suggested.

“I’d expect nothing less from you,” I said.

I felt proud.

*‘This is a family-like company and a family-like guild.’*

Everyone wanted to help me.

I noticed passion in the working staffers, and I also saw others smiling while working.

I couldn’t help but nod at the beautiful sight.

Honestly, Kim Mi-Young and I could have handled it ourselves.

We just needed to work slowly on the loot distribution, and we didn’t need so many people to help us. Since the staffers were competent, I was sure they were aware of that, so I liked them even more upon seeing them come to work so early.

Just then, a short-statured staffer walked up to Miss Kim Mi-Young.

“Miss Kim Mi-Young, Miss Lee Ji-Hye is here.”

“*Ah*, okay. Please take care of her as I instructed earlier,” Miss Kim Mi-Young said.

“Yes, Ma’am.”

*'How come she's already here?’*

“Please call her to the meeting room right away,” I ordered.

“Yes, sir,” Miss Kim Mi-Young responded.

It bothered me that Ji-Hye noona was making a move so fast.

Naturally, my face turned red.

*‘Damn it.’*

Ji-Hye noona flung the door open and walked into the meeting room.

“What brings you here?” I asked.

“What do you mean? I came to see you,” Lee Ji-Hye replied.

“That’s not what I meant. You’re part of the management committee, and I didn’t even contact you in the first place…” I told her.

“I should attend *because* I’m part of the management committee. I have to see if the items are being distributed fairly,” she said.

“…”

“That’s what the public knows, but there's a different reason behind my visit. Yeon-Joo unni has asked me for a favor. I don’t need to tell you about the contribution of the Black Swan Guild, but I would like for you to take care of us a little more.

"Here’s the list of items. The guild wants to obtain three items… these mission logs and battle logs should be enough for us to get them. I worked hard to prepare this, so I’m sure you won’t disagree.

"Additionally, here’s the counterargument of other guilds that want the same items as us, so look over them carefully. It won’t take long for you to look them over, right?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Noona, you know this is illegal, right?” I questioned.

“It’s not illegal as long as you and I stay quiet,” Lee Ji-Hye argued.

*‘Oh Ji-Hye noona.’*

*'Look at her being so confident. This is what you call corruption.'*

I saw the neatly organized documents, and like she said, I didn’t need to think much about the Black Swan Guild’s contribution. However, she still brought so many documents to ensure that I wouldn't be able to argue.

The evidence was extremely solid to the extent that I couldn't find any holes.

However, I found it strange that the other guilds and groups were discussing this matter rather than wrapping up their discussion as soon as possible.

*‘Did she assume there was going to be a meeting this early in the morning?'*

*‘She was certain that I'd immediately convene a meeting upon seeing that video.’*

I couldn’t help but assume that she got everything ready first before contacting me.

Of course, it was just pure speculation on my end, but she was certainly capable of doing that. Rather than making a request by using her personal connections, she used this method, as this was the more *official* way.

It could be said that she had been waiting for me to convene a meeting since she gave me that video.

My face turned red again.

“*Hm…* not bad. I’ll use it as a reference, noona,” I told her.

“I’d appreciate that,” Lee Ji-Hye said. She then sat next to me and propped her chin with her hands while staring directly at me.

“Anyway, I thought it was going to be really effective, and it must be true. I thought you were going to summon everyone tomorrow morning… You shouldn’t call for people in the middle of the night. I’m sure people won’t say much, but it’s still too sudden,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“…”

“Did you like it that much? You must’ve been excited,” Lee Ji-Hye commented.

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“The video. You convened this meeting because of the video I sent you. The video showed your guild members going nuts to save you. They said they don’t care if the world gets destroyed after seeing the rift and about how they couldn’t forget you…

"They all cried and came together; even Jung Ha-Yan went desperate with her spells. Wait, did I send you the wrong video?” Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

“…”

“Did I accidentally send you a video of Jo Hye-Jin and Elias drinking coffee together?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Yeah, I think that’s what I saw,” I replied.

“…”

“…” “You’re so cute, oppa,” she commented.

“Well, whatever. I was going to get up anyway. I’m busy, and it’s not really because of the video you sent. Anyway, thanks for the data,” I said.

“…”

“But did those two *really* drink coffee together?” I asked.

Lee Ji-Hye nodded.

"Really?" I asked.

“Yes, really. They *really* drank coffee together,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

# CHAPTER 1021
# CLEANUP (4)

“I saw hearts in their eyes,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Whose eyes? Hye-Jin’s?” I asked.

“No. There’s no way our Hye-Jin will ever look at him like that. I’m talking about the old elf. He should act his age. He’s just getting in the way of her bright future," I added.

"You know there are already rumors about it, right? Something about Elias… and the Blue Guild’s Goddess of Spear. There are even articles… stating that there’s nothing wrong with their love life,” Lee Ji-Hye replied.

“…”

“He’s really getting in the way of her future. I guarantee that the old elf was aiming for this. It’s been years since the elves were ignorant of human life. Do you know how weak the elves are these days? I’m sure all of this is calculated,” Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

“So he’s trying to utilize the press first. It also seems like he’s trying to get rid of any potential rivals around him… and the timing fits. Did I get it right, noona?” I asked.

“You’re right. How dare an expired old man like him try to make a move on her,” Lee Ji-Hye complained.

*‘That was kind of harsh. You shouldn’t use the word "expired" on anyone.’*

“Seriously. He should be ashamed. He took just one hit from Spirit Gelk and immediately lost consciousness, so how dare he drink coffee with her? Doesn’t he have work to do? Is he drinking coffee after taking care of

everything?" I questioned.

"I looked into it just in case, but I didn't see any issues. I'm not trying to be stereotypical here, but elves are old-fashioned people. I'm embarrassed to say this because it seems like we're digging our own grave… but it's actually us that'll have problems," she said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Did I not tell you? We're not done with the cleanup," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"How is that possible? Actually, the dungeon is pretty big… so it makes sense…" I said.

Despite that, it didn't make sense that we weren't done with the cleanup just yet.

"So you're saying that there are more items than the ones listed here?" I asked.

"Yes. Of course, we got the important ones, but I don't think we're done yet. It's safe to assume that there are items we have yet to discover," Lee Ji-Hye answered.

"Didn't Ha-Yan set up a warp gate? Is that why it slowed down?" I asked.

"She set up the warp gate on the first day," Lee Ji-Hye replied.

"So what's the problem?" I asked.

"Everyone is eyeing the situation. Even if the Committee tries to mediate, they won't be able to do so. It's not within their jurisdiction in the first place, so they must've wanted a piece of the action.

"Even if they try to meditate, they won't be able to understand and will try to figure things out on their own… It was hard contacting the clean-up company after every meeting," Lee Ji-Hye replied.

“There’s the company we use often,” I said.

“It's pretty big, so one company isn't enough. People have been keeping each other in check because they're worried that the companies might alter the results for their own profit.

"There were lobbyists, too. When we had to use too many companies, they started saying that we needed a supervisory committee and that we needed the power of the Continental Protection Management Committee.

"They even asked people to volunteer to keep an eye on people so that they won't take the items away,” she continued.

“Maybe it’s because the pie is big…” I mumbled.

*‘This is pretty bad.’*

“Maybe it’s because they all know how to fight, but they’re stubborn… and the results are clear. There are many people who have decided to stay quiet, but more and more people are starting to show their greed, so things are becoming a mess. There are people who are grouping up using their connections…” Lee Ji-Hye added.

“And the Blue Guild?” I asked.

“Why are you mentioning the Blue Guild here? We're talking about the dungeon raid, not the continental crisis,” she said.

“*Ah!*”

I finally realized how this happened.

*‘The dungeon does not belong to the Blue Guild.’*

It was a fact that I had forgotten.

Even with the continental law, the ownership of a dungeon had always been

a controversial topic. The more I looked into it, the more complicated it became in my eyes, but to make things simple, the owner of the land where the dungeon was discovered and the first discoverer of the dungeon would have the biggest share of the pie.

The Sacred Democratic Country was a pro-adventurer state, so they gave the first discoverer the biggest share, and the Republic gave the biggest share to the owner of the land. Except for the minor details, it wasn't all that different.

Of course, this applied to the Mole Saint's Sanctuary as well. The dungeon was discovered inside the Vatican. There was room for controversy, but if we were to look into the first discoverer, I'd have to say that it was Rafael's party.

They were the first ones to investigate the strange phenomenon in the dungeon, but they had gathered a ton of information as well. In the end, they discovered the dungeon, so it wouldn't be right to exclude his party when they had made a great contribution.

My name was included in the list, but I didn't participate under the Blue Guild's name.

I was working with the Continental Protection Management Committee, the Vatican's Heretic Inquisitors, and other groups, but the first two didn't have the same interests as me, so they were excluded.

In the end, if I were asked who deserved to have the biggest share, I'd say Rafael's party, me, and then the Vatican.

*'Things have gotten complicated.'*

The Vatican would be satisfied with owning the empty and cleared dungeon, as it was a religious symbol…

*'Things are going to get crazy.'*

However, it meant that Rafael's party would have ownership of the dungeon.

Of course, the owner of the dungeon would not necessarily own all the treasures.

However, it wasn't like they wouldn't get anything at all, but it was written in the contract that the rewards would be given based on the contribution levels.

Honestly, it wasn't that much of a problem because it had already been confirmed that Rafael's party would have a much bigger reward, as they owned the dungeon.

The problem was that it was Rafael's party that would be getting the rewards. The former baby party could not possibly take control of the situation when many powerful groups were already kicking up a fuss.

Their power and reputation had grown significantly, but there was a reason they were called the Holy Sword Warrior Party. They knew nothing except for fighting; they could not do any administrative work, and they also had no experience in resolving issues like this one.

*'All they have are their bodies.'*

They had also never been involved in a political issue like this.

Rafael's party was just a party that enjoyed going on adventures. Their wanderlust was so strong that they didn't need a guild house. They traveled all over the continent without thinking about complicated issues like profits and ownership.

A group like theirs was easy to subdue, so I was sure that people would come at them as if they were prey.

"That's why I've been waiting for you. You're the honorary cardinal of the Vatican, and you helped Rafael's party discover the dungeon. In other words, you're in the perfect position to mediate. As the Saint of Sacrifice and Light, not only are you symbolic, but you have the justification to mediate as well," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"…"

"I thought Commander Jin was going to help, but I was wrong. He must be upset. I'm sure he wants to get a piece of the action, but he's just watching the situation like he's protesting in silence…" Lee Ji-Hye added.

"He's always been like that… Anyway, I'm sure they're in a desperate situation," I said.

"Rafael? Of course. He didn't even visit you, did he?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

*'Come to think of it, she's right.'*

Speak of the devil…

"Sub Guild Master, Mr. Rafael is here."

I had no choice but to look at Ji-Hye noona.

I asked her quietly if I could let Rafael into the meeting room.

"Tell him to come in. Those with a brain will be here soon, anyway," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"Please let him in," I ordered.

Rafael looked really haggard as he walked into the meeting room.

"H-Hyung…" Rafael mumbled.

*'Looks like he's been suffering a lot.'*

"I haven't been able to… visit you… I'm really glad that you're safe, hyung," Rafael said.

*'Why did he lose so much weight… '*

"You heard… what happened, right? I'm sorry. If… I was a bit smarter… this

wouldn't have happened…" Rafael mumbled.

*'Look at those dark circles.'*

He looked fine on the outside, but that was it. He looked as if he were under a powerful black mage's curse. It was like his soul had become corrupted, and he was feeling an indescribable sense of self-doubt.

I couldn't imagine how hard it had to have been for him to be thrown into the vortex of politics when he had never been involved in politics all his life.

"It's just…" Rafael paused.

"…"

"I tried to do my best… I didn't want to cause trouble… but it didn't work out… like I had thought," Rafael continued.

*'Yeah, I understand it all. What can you do?'*

Muddying the waters, avoiding the crux of the matter, and talking nonsense as if it were the truth. No, they didn't even need to go that far.

Rafael wouldn't be able to do anything if a few groups joined hands and oppressed them. What could he do in a meeting room once everyone raised their swords against him? He'd just stutter and ask them to calm down.

"You brought the logs of the last meeting and the requests of each guild, right?" I asked.

"Yes, hyung. I don't know if it has the information you're looking for… but Marian worked hard on it," Rafael replied.

*'Miracle Priest Marian. It's pretty obvious. Having a lot of data doesn't necessarily mean it's a good thing, so why is this so heavy?'*

Marian had to have thought that she organized the data pretty well, but for

this type of report, each guild had their own standards and rules. Just listing everything wasn't useful enough. The report was poorly made by a rookie who never had a life in a guild.

*'It's really messy.'*

The meeting logs were even worse.

There were people who spoke up even though they didn't have the right to do so, and many of them directly ignored the moderator. It was true that Rafael's party was easily influenced, but there were people who ignored basic procedures and manners.

Of course, I could not blame them for doing so.

*'I would do the same if I were in their shoes, after all.'*

Actually, it was natural for them to act that way. There was a reason why dungeons were put up for auction. Even if small parties broke through their limits or recruited mercenaries to clear a dungeon, they'd still end up like Rafael's party.

Those weak would be torn to shreds and eaten by the strong—the world had always been like that.

*'The others who attended the meeting must've felt really frustrated.'*

"I didn't ask for help in case it would become a problem… and everyone seemed on edge about it…" Rafael said.

"The solution they came up with in the recent meeting was to send two members from each guild and have them join Rafael's party. Of course, there were many complaints because of the spots," Lee Ji-Hye chimed in.

"And the Red Mercenary Guild?" I asked.

"The guild master of that guild has actually retired, so Mr. Choi Young-Ki

attended in her place… but he's inexperienced in politics as well… and it looks like our Yeon-Joo unni has decided to just remain quiet. You know that obvious dialogue that's bound to be said? I'm trying to prevent it in advance," Lee Ji-Hye replied.

"What dialogue?" I asked.

"This is too much. Of course, we understand where you're coming from… but we didn't participate in the expedition just to watch as the three major guilds of Lindel take away all the items like this," Lee Ji-Hye answered.

I knew it…

"This is too much. Of course, we understand where you're coming from… but we didn't participate in the expedition just to watch as the three major guilds of Lindel take away all the items like this," said one of the expedition members, repeating after Ji-Hye noona ad verbum.

"Of course, we acknowledge the achievements of the three guilds, but it's an undeniable fact that we should get what we deserve," they said.

"…"

"Didn't we confirm through this incident that the continent is still under threat? The death rate in the Federation, the Union, and the Kingdom of Others is soaring as we speak. It's all because the small to mid-sized guilds there are in dire need of people and equipment. To resolve the unequal power distribution throughout the continent, the item distribution has to be fair. It's all for the sake of making the continent a safer place."

*'What the hell is this bastard talking about?'*

"What do you think about the current state of the continent, Father Lee Ki-Young?" someone asked.

*'What do you mean?'*

I couldn’t help but gnash my teeth.

# CHAPTER 1022
# CLEANUP (5)

I actually knew that they were going to argue. They'd get the entire world with just a few words, so it'd be weirder if they hadn't said anything.

Everyone had their own problems, and they all probably thought that they had fought a war that put their lives at risk. Naturally, they would want a fair reward or something more than that.

*'Yeah, fair compensation sounds nice.'*

I was not saying that the expedition members didn't deserve to get rewarded.

It was true that our Hyun-Sung, Hee-Ra noona, and Ha-Yan had unleashed the final blow, but if we hadn't carried out the raid as an expedition group…

*'No one would know for sure how things would turn out.'*

It didn't seem like a big deal now that it was over, but there were a few times when I had almost lost my life. I was not sure about the others, but Commander Jin, who was sitting over there with a frown, would understand what I was talking about.

This raid was a success because the expedition group gave everything they got.

Everyone, including the named members, used every ounce of their magic and stamina to turn the raid into a success. As proof, the hair of some mages actually turned white from the exertion. They were still suffering from the aftereffects of the expedition, even though it had been a long time since then.

It was true that I was observing this situation with an open mind because

there had to be room for negotiation, depending on their contributions. However, I felt really annoyed to hear a fish-looking man speak about something absurd.

“What do you think of the current state of the continent, Father Lee Ki-Young?”

*‘What do you mean?’*

“…”

Actually, he did not seem to be hostile.

It was true that he looked like a fish, but there wasn't anything strange about this nature or unique habit.

*‘A cautious revolutionist?’*

How come he wasn't being cautious right now?

“I believe you’ll understand, Father Lee Ki-Young,” he said.

*‘Understand what?’*

“Excuse me, but do you mind if I talk a bit more? Please take a look at the Goddess’ Mirror,” he said.

“That’s…”

“Go ahead. I give you permission,” I said.

“Thank you, Father. Does anyone know what this graph means?” he asked.

I saw a map of the continent.

The map showed the Sacred Democratic Country, the Federation, the Union, the Republic, the Union of Other Races, and other neutral nations like Laios.

I had no idea what the graph meant since nothing was written on it, but the Sacred Democratic Country was the highest, and it was followed by the Republic, and then the Federation.

I assumed the graph showed the inequality between the nations that he had mentioned earlier. The next graph was reversed; the Sacred Democratic Country was the lowest, so I assumed it meant the death rate or injury rate.

Compared to the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic, the Federation's death rate was extremely high.

We would have to verify to see whether the data was real or not, but the data was most likely real. I was not sure about the Union, but everyone was aware that the Federation had lost its ability to function as a proper nation.

The capital and the cities within the Federation were not in the best situation.

*'Oh, to be young again.'*

The fish-looking man was speaking using his passion alone as the impetus for his actions. Eventually, he gained the confidence to speak before us.

"The former shows the imbalance between nations, and the latter shows the death rate. As you can see, the Federation and the Union's death rate is…"

I could already deduce what he was going to say, but his words were worth listening to.

"I believe the Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary is the first ever dungeon that is based on the continent's history, but I wouldn't be surprised if this happened again.

"The Sacred Democratic Country was in the middle of this strange phenomenon. If it hadn't been for Rafael's party and Father Lee Ki-Young, a dungeon break phenomenon would have occurred," he explained.

“…”

“Could you imagine what would have happened if it hadn't been for the Sacred Democratic Country? We would have failed in our initial attempt to clear it, much less conquer it. There would have been many casualties.

"The Federation, the Union, some parts of the Republic, and a few neutral nations are experiencing a serious shortage of manpower, resources, and arms. There are less than ten guilds capable of going on a full expedition, and many talented adventurers are being forced out onto the streets or as mercenaries.

"This is the current state of the small cities that are being neglected as we speak,” he continued.

“…”

“The people who recently moved there have become defeatists, and none of the government policies can comfort those adventurers. Public order is at an all-time low, and inequality is creating new inequalities. I’m sure all of you are aware that this is getting worse,” he added.

“…”

“Of course, I’m aware of the Continental Management Protection Committee’s Adventurer Support Policy and the welfare policies of the small cities, but the harsh reality is that those are simply not enough.

"I believe the era of war and rivalry is over, Father Lee Ki-Young. Through the 27th Legion Summoning incident, the Outer Gods War, the continent-cum-dungeon incident, and the Mole Saint’s Cozy Sanctuary Raid, we proved that the continent can unite.

"We have our own unique personality, but humanity has proven that we can join hands whenever there’s a threat. That is why I believe that we cannot neglect this any longer,” he said.

"…"

"The small cities of the Federation and Union are dying. Many are starving and bleeding. Right now, we should be looking back, not forward," he said.

"…"

"The continent must join hands and face the new threat that may come our way. I believe this meeting… is the first step in achieving that," he added.

*'He sure talks a lot of nonsense.'*

I understood why he was complaining to me, but I wasn't sure why he included pictures of starving children in the Federation, and adventurers suffering due to the failure of their expedition.

"I have no doubt that this is the start," he said.

*'Basically, he wants us to support them more.'*

It made sense, but…

*'Why is he saying all of that right now?'*

He could have told the Continental Protection Management Committee to hold a meeting or express his grievances through the many committee agencies out there.

At the moment, we were supposed to be talking about the contribution-based loot distribution. I felt like the fish-looking man was talking nonsense, as he wouldn't be able to obtain the reward that he wanted if the distribution were contribution-based.

I was sure that was the reason he suggested that we think on the national level.

It was none of my business whether he had a grand plan or not, but it was

undeniable that he was doing something strange here. However, it was understandable.

He probably thought he had a good chance of succeeding, as I was famous for being biased toward those who were weak.

*'If Hyun-Sung or Hee-Ra noona were here, he wouldn't be able to say ridiculous things.'*

I was on the side of the light, so I had to be careful about my words and reaction.

"That's…" I muttered blankly. I acted like I had no idea what he was talking about and that I hadn't noticed the plight of the small cities until now. Of course, I cast a surreptitious glance at Jin Cheong.

*'Please do it.'*

*'Help me just this once, Cheong hyung. I know you're upset, but help me out a little.'*

*'Damn it, please… '*

I really wanted to punch for pretending like he couldn't notice me, but I had to send him signals.

*'I've been in pain for a long time. You should know since you visited me once.'*

Please…

*'I'm really exhausted, mentally. That's why I went into hiding. You heard the situation from Ji-Hye noona, right? About how I've been struggling.'*

*'Please tell them in my place, Warrior. You made mistakes as well and I really took care of the Republic this time… Are you really going to ignore me like this?'*

And that was when I heard him speak…

“How ridiculous.”

“What? What do you—”

“I said that it’s ridiculous,” Jin Cheong repeated.

“This is an official meeting, Commander Jin Cheong. I know you’re the Hero of Shadows, but making comments like that—”

“All I did was tell the truth. The Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic aren’t your parents. We’re providing humanitarian aid, but that’s… carried out out of compassion.

"We’re not obligated to clean up the mess you made, you idiot,” Jin Cheong interrupted the fish-looking man.

*‘So refreshing!’*

“That’s the relationship between nations and groups. Do you know how much the Democratic Country and the Republic is paying the Continental Protection Management Committee to help all of you?

"You’re spouting all this nonsense without knowing how much the Republic has been paying annually to support you guys. Your current position and the qualifications you hold to be able to come here… that does not belong to you alone,” Jin Cheong added.

*‘Commander Jin!’*

“The death rate of adventurers or the continent’s epic story that will soon begin or whatever isn’t what’s important. That’s something you guys need to take care of. That’s not our job,” Jin Cheong continued.

“The continent could experience a bigger disaster. Think about it. If a strange phenomenon occurs in a small city in the Federation—”

“We can create a new organization under the Continental Protection Management Committee’s name. What about the Crisis Response Team? That organization will track down anomalous phenomena and handle them.

"Someone else will have to pay for the budget… but if the continent is really in danger, then it’s needed,” Jin Cheong suggested.

“Are you suggesting that we have an independent organization that can send troops to other nations anytime? Do you really think that those with influence on the continent, except us, will stand by and let that happen? That isn’t a realistic method,” argued the fish-looking man.

“I don’t know what you want us to do. I don’t really see a big difference between the corrupted people of the Federation and you. You’re saying that you want a reward. Isn't that right?” Jin Cheong asked.

*‘This hyung must not care about his image.’*

Jin Cheong had to have stopped talking respectfully because he thought that the guy didn’t deserve any respect.

I looked around and noticed some people who were clearly in the opposition.

The members of the Sacred Democratic Country seemed like they didn’t care at all, while the Union and Federation had taken on a wait-and-see attitude.

Despite that, I was certain that they felt like their portion of the pie was tiny, as they were discreetly cheering for the fish. Unfortunately, Jin Cheong was just too blunt, rendering them both speechless and embarrassed.

If they wanted something, they needed to give up something in exchange.

The guilds and groups of the Republic wouldn’t just sit by and let this happen.

Just then, a young man from the Republic raised his hand.

“I have no objections whatsoever regarding the item distribution. Actually… they gave up on a lot of things; I'm sure we know how much the Blue Guild has sacrificed, so if the items were distributed solely based on contribution…” the young man trailed off before continuing, "It’s the Federation and the Union that weren’t being considerate, but…”

“…”

“I think we should take some time to discuss what… Squiat of the Federation had told us,” he suggested.

I glanced over at Jin Cheong to question if the young man really was his subordinate. I asked him why his subordinate was saying strange things without his permission, but he turned his head away as if saying that the young man had nothing to do with him.

*‘What the heck?’*

It wasn’t just him.

Some people from the Sacred Democratic Country and other places seemed to be in agreement with the fish's remark earlier. Actually, it was more like they were cheering for him. I couldn’t understand their decision.

I knew there were many people who'd simply jump on the bandwagon, but I just couldn’t understand why they were agreeing with the fish’s words.

The fish's words were equivalent to helping others in exchange for giving up what you could obtain.

*‘Idiots like that actually exist on the continent? I had no idea.’*

And that was when a certain thought popped into my head…

*‘These bastards… ’*

“P-Please stop, Commander Jin. Also, Mr. Squiat… please stop here. I think

we're getting too heated here… so I think it's best if we continue this tomorrow."

"Yes, Father."

"Yes, please…"

*'No way these jerks… '*

"…"

*'It can't be… '*

The new threat that the continent could face someday…

They…

*'They must be talking about me.'*

I wasn't certain, but I had a feeling that some of them were secretly in agreement.

*'They must be thinking that I might become the new threat to the continent… '*

Perhaps Kim Hyun-Sung was right.

At this point, I had no choice but to *really* think about it.

# CHAPTER 1023
# CLEANUP (6)

*'Light Ki-Young must've made a huge impact.'*

I was in the process of improving my image, but my first appearance to the public had to have left a strong impression.

It was only natural for people with a right mind to be wary of Light Ki-Young.

The continent was pro-Lee Ki-Young.

This was true for the Sacred Democratic Country, the Republic, Laios, and the Union of Others. I also had a connection with many influential people. Those within my domain felt comfortable and relaxed, but those watching from a few steps away were wary of me.

If Light Ki-Young were to awaken again, would the continent be able to handle it? The suspicion that started from a simple question led to another question.

Once it became out of control, I'd have to come up with a plan against it.

The transcendent beings on this continent were at my hands and feet, and they would not hesitate to sacrifice themselves for me.

The Sunset Swordsman, the archmage, and the Red Goddess of War were so obsessed with me that they couldn't think straight. It was a fact that made many influential people keep an eye on me.

*'Looks like telling everyone to be quiet had back-fired. It's understandable because they were told to keep quiet despite the chaos.'*

Investigating the incident right away would be the right thing to do; even if

the Heretic Inquisitors weren't the ones doing the investigation, we needed to go through the protocol, as there was obviously something wrong.

*'The decision was definitely strange in their eyes.'*

If Light Ki-Young descended once again, the continent would surely be destroyed.

The fish of the Federation and the young ones probably felt that way.

They probably thought they needed to join forces in order to prepare for the worst-case scenario. Light Ki-Young was not the only reason. They thought they could no longer stand by and watch the continent being controlled by just one person.

If they were imagining the awakening of the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep inside me, then this situation would become even worse.

If the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep was really hiding inside the Saint of Light—no, if my current appearance was just a disguise…

I had no idea how they interpreted the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep, but I had a feeling they were treating it as if it were the dark version of myself. They saw me as the final villain who had enslaved the Sunset Swordsman using my excellent oratory skills and unique habit.

They were looking at me as someone strong enough to put Bahamut into an eternal slumber.

If they were assuming that the monarch was consolidating his power while waiting for the right time to strike, then it was only natural for them to be wary of me.

They believed that the monarch would use his powers and strike both the Federation and the Union first. I thought perhaps I was getting too ahead of myself by making that assumption, but I had a feeling that there was something bigger here—bigger than them being wary of a dictatorship due

to the centralized system of the continent.

Of course, it wasn't like I was talking without any evidence here. My assumption was proven by the fact that the fish had spouted a bunch of nonsense and some people agreed with him.

“Then… we’ll hand over the Legendary item, Mithril Bow of the Lame Heretic Hunter, to the C&C Guild of the Federation,” I announced.

*‘Of course, I might be wrong, so I need to confirm things first.’*

“Please speak up if anyone has any objections,” I said.

“No objections here as long as the Union of Other Races is okay with it,” someone answered.

“What about you, Mr. Elias…” I asked.

“Yes, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. If we can have a bigger share of the monster’s corpse, it's fine. To be honest, no one knows how to handle it properly besides the dwarves…” Elias replied.

“If there are no other objections, we’ll hand over the Mithril Bow of the Lame Heretic Hunter to the C&C Guild,” I announced.

*‘And that jerk Elias is so slow-witted. Stupid jerk.’*

For some reason, Elias was supporting the Federation, and he was smiling with satisfaction as if he had nothing to do with this. I thought perhaps he made some kind of deal with the fish of the Federation, but he wasn't the type to do something like that.

*‘I think he just wants to impress me.’*

The Saint of Light was bothered by the fact that the Federation was being alienated, so he was trying to show that he was supporting me as the representative of the Union.

*‘Wretched bastard. No matter what you do, I won’t let you have Hye-Jin, damn it.’*

Of course, it wasn't like the Union was suffering any damages.

Since they had dwarf craftsmen, taking a high-ranking monster was more beneficial than taking an item.

The dwarves would be the ones working hard, but the dwarves enjoyed making things in the first place, so that was irrelevant.

Elias could help the marginalized group, improve his image, and help me, who was walking on thin ice because of the influential figures of the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic. In his eyes, this was killing two birds with one stone.

“If there’s something you want, please tell me, Mr. Elias. The Bow of the Lame Heretic Hunter… is an item that ought to be returned to the Union of Others…” I told him.

“It’s fine, Father Lee Ki-Young. I appreciate the thought, but you don’t have to worry about me,” Elias answered.

“But—”

“It’s fine,” he interrupted me.

I was annoyed by his warm smile. He’d probably tell Hye-Jin that the Union of Others suffered some losses for the future of the continent.

*‘He hasn’t actually suffered any losses.’*

“As I mentioned earlier, the Dagger of Chief Justice Calix… will be given to the Black Swan Guild,” I announced.

“Thank you, Father Lee Ki-Young,” Park Yeon-Joo said.

“I’m sorry I couldn't take better care of you, Miss Park Yeon-Joo,” I apologized.

“I appreciate the thought, Father,” she said.

The Black Swan Guild took four, the Red Mercenary Guild took five, and the Blue Guild took six. The other mid-sized guilds in Lindel took two items each.

Mist Summoner Cheon Kwan-Wi took three, and Sniper Yu Ran took two items.

Small guilds and parties either took one Legendary item or five Epic items. Jin Cheong, who was at the center of the Republic and was the representative of the Republic's guild and clans, took twenty-two items.

*‘I’m sure he’ll distribute it as he sees fit.’*

In addition, the representatives of the Republic took about three to six Legendary items. The Union of Others, who had provided dwarven supplies and had a decent performance, took over ten items.

“The next spellbook will be given to the Post Malone Guild,” I informed.

“Thank you.”

Things were going swimmingly. I took care of the Federation, and I had distributed the items pretty fairly.

However, I was about to face a problem.

“The Mythic items, Archbishop Draktaris’ Staff of Waiting and Templar Bahamut’s Shield of Sadness and Despair will be given to the Blue Guild,” I announced.

“…”

“And the Mythic item, Templar Simon’s Spider Web Dagger, will be given to

the representative of the Republic. Templar Simon’s Spider Web Wire will be given to the Black Swan Guild,” I said.

“…”

“The Mythic item, Templar Gen’s Precious Rosario of Friendship and Respect, will be given to Rafael’s party,” I added.

“…”

“Templar Vulcamos’ Hammer of Despair will be given to the Red Mercenary Guild,” I said.

I couldn't give these items away.

[Archbishop Draktaris’ Staff of Waiting - Mythic]

[A staff used for eons by Archbishop Draktaris of the Underground Temple. The staff was in his hands every day, including during his prayers to Lucifer, Saint Altanus, and the Priest of Prophecy.

[The ordinary staff has been absorbing Draktaris' holy power, transforming it into a sacred and holy relic capable of wielding the power of those whom he respected and had faith in.]

[Increases the wielder's Holy Power by +20]

[Grants the wielder the Mythic skill: Draktaris' Priests.]

[Draktaris' Priests: Summons priests to fight for the wielder. Lasts for 1 Hour.]

[Priest of Prophecy… Priest of Prophecy… I'm waiting for you… I will be waiting until you find me.]

This staff would go to Hee-Young.

[Templar Bahamut’s Shield of Sadness and Despair - Mythic]

[The personal shield and secondary weapon of the Hero of the Distant Past, a Templar of the Underground Temple, the Crimson Prophet, and a demigod. The Hero of the Distant Past is a swordsman who rarely uses a shield.

[However, a shocking incident led him into losing his mind, and he abandoned all his weapons, turning his back on everything he had faith in. He abandoned his greatsword capable of killing a demigod and his helmet that could deflect any attack.

[For some reason, he did not abandon this shield. Perhaps the shield has a symbolic meaning, but the reason is ultimately unknown.]

[The shield will choose its master.]

[I couldn't protect him, but someday… someday…]

This shield would go to our Deok-Gu.

It was undeniable that the Archbishop Draktaris’ Staff of Waiting was an awesome staff.

In addition, the pig was definitely the best choice for the shield, as it would surely boost his strength. The problem was everyone else's reaction.

*‘Nothing has changed compared to the situation earlier when the fish was talking a bunch of nonsense.’*

A few Legendary items were given to the Federation, but there was a reason Mythic items were *Mythic*. If the wielder had good synergy with a Mythic item, Legendary-rank adventurers would get a taste of what it was like to be a transcendent.

If they wanted to face the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep, then it was natural for them to drool over this item.

*‘So what? I’m giving this to our piggy.’*

“If there are any other objections…”

“Well…”

It looked like they wanted to say something but they couldn’t say anything due to the atmosphere. I was sure they wanted a fair distribution of the items on their wishlist, but they couldn't tell me to distribute the Mythic fairly.

*‘It’s because they did nothing, after all.’*

“Just as I mentioned earlier, the item distribution is based on contribution to prevent any issues. I’ll ask again. If there are any objections—”

“Would it be okay if I said something?”

“Go ahead, Master Goodman,” I answered.

“I understand giving a Mythic item to the Red Mercenary Guild for participating in the Archbishop Draktaris’ raid and contributing a lot in the Templar Bahamut raid. I also understand giving one to the Black Swan Guild for spearheading the missions and fighting Templar Simon.

"I also understand giving one to Rafael’s party for discovering the dungeon and successfully luring Templar Bahamut. I also understand giving a Mythic item to Commander Jin Cheong of the Republic for leading the operation and the expedition group.

"Of course, I also understand giving an item to the Sunset Swordsman who played an important role in taking down Templar Bahamut,” Master Goodman said.

“Okay,” I said.

“I admit that the Sunset Swordsman's achievements are so outstanding that

no one can be compared to him, but…" Master Goodman paused.

"Go on," I said.

"The Bahamut raid would have been impossible if the other expedition teams hadn't helped us, Father Lee Ki-Young. In fact, the operation to lure Bahamut has thoroughly exhausted them. The success of that operation was all thanks to the sacrifice and effort of the other expedition members…" Master Goodman trailed off.

"Yes?"

"B-Basically… the Sunset wordsman has accomplished a lot of, but I think I-It's kind of unfair to use that as a reason to give him two Mythic—no, that's not what I meant. It's just… the Sunset Swordsman has already claimed Spirit Gelk's Boots, and it was a Semi-Mythic item…" Master Goodman explained.

"Are you saying that the Sunset Swordsman's performance isn't worthy of two Mythic items?" I asked.

"That's not… what I meant. However… I believe… it's worth discussing it…" Master Goodman replied.

"There's no need for that. I understand what you're trying to say, Master Goodman. I thought about those things and concluded that giving him Spirit Belk's Boots and a Mythic item is a good idea," I explained.

"Then… the remaining…"

"Templar Bahamut's Shield of Sadness and Despair is a reward for my achievements and contribution," I told him.

I was sure no one would object, as everyone knew how much I had contributed as the Commander of the expedition and the Saint of Light. Some of the people here looked as if I had betrayed them.

*‘They must’ve thought that I was going to give it away.’*

I didn't even need to mention the fact that I had used the invitation to travel to the past. If my contributions were calculated as the overall commander of the expedition, I'd have more than just a Mythic item.

“As the honorary bishop of the continent, my mission is to watch over the peace and safety of the continent, but…” I paused briefly before continuing, “I’m also the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild."

I was being kind of greedy, but I had always been a selfless saint ready to sacrifice everything without receiving anything, so this was the first time I decided to claim what I deserved.

# CHAPTER 1024
# CLEANUP (7)

They'd be idiots if they were to refuse to change their attitudes here.

“I-I see. I just…” Master Goodman paused.

“…”

“I… made a mistake, Father Lee Ki-Young,” Master Goodman said.

*‘Give someone an inch, and they’ll take a mile.’*

“I’m… really sorry. I don’t know what to say…” Master Goodman mumbled.

“It’s fine, Master Goodman. Did that… answer your question? If you have any more questions—”

“No, I don’t want to keep being rude, and I’m actually embarrassed. I-I can’t believe I forgot to consider your achievements, Father,” Master Goodman interrupted.

*‘At least you have a brain. I'll rate you sixty out of a hundred points. I won’t forget you.’*

“I’m… really, really sorry, Father,” Master Goodman said.

“You don’t have to apologize so much, Master Goodman. If… there are no other objections, Draktaris’ Staff and Bahamut’s Shield will be distributed to the Blue Guild,” I announced.

They couldn’t say anything. The people in the same group as the fish looked as if they wanted to say something, but they didn’t want to repeat Master Goodman's mistake.

*‘I did more than enough to take care of you guys. Don’t you agree?’*

I felt like they were thinking about a way to negotiate once the rewards were distributed, but there was no way they could do that here.

They couldn't say anything about the Mythic items that would be distributed to my guild, and it was all because of my achievements.

They had no right to stop me, and they also had no right to question why I wanted the Mythic items. They could force it and ask me, but I could easily stop them in their tracks by acting as if I couldn't tell them to protect my image. Anyway, I was relieved.

*‘They must be thinking that the word 'sacrifice' is the only word in my dictionary because I’ve been doing nothing but making sacrifices all this while.’*

I wanted to show them…

*‘I want to show them that I have wants and needs as well.’*

It was actually funny how they had forgotten my achievements in the reward distribution.

Considering my actions upon descending to this continent as the Saint of Light, it was understandable that they’d misunderstand, but…

*‘It’s a shame there are so many people who only think about themselves.’*

I was thankful for the people who were looking at me with a puzzled look, like Master Goodman. Those people hadn't done anything wrong. They were just surprised by my unexpected actions, as I had always given up my share of the reward until now.

I couldn't feel any hostility from them.

The problem was the ungrateful ones. I was talking about the rude bastards who looked like they were questioning my decision. They looked like I

couldn't understand their position, and they also looked disappointed in me.

*'They really are shameless.'*

The people here were influential people.

Of course, it was undeniable that the adventurers of the Federation and the Union were weak compared to the Sacred Democratic Country, but they were considered strong within their respective groups.

If anything, the average stats of these Adventurers were low…

*'But they're probably living like kings in the small cities.'*

Guilds like the three major guilds of Lindel were incredibly rare. There weren't any guilds like them that could help each other and move forward together. Free cities had a guild or clan that represented their city, and obviously, they had absolute power in their city.

It was highly likely that these people had gotten a taste of sweet power… in their tiny city.

*'I wouldn't have said anything if you had used those sweet powers to set an example.'*

I had never received a report saying a saint or saintess had appeared in the Federation or in the Union. People like them were usually known by names like Saint of the Abandoned. I had never heard of a story about people saving the underprivileged by sacrificing themselves or any heartwarming story.

*'People like you are the worst. Forcing others to give in when you haven't given anything up yourself.'*

They were trying to make progressive movements in their own way. They were also doing welfare work, but I was sure that what they were doing wasn't anything impressive.

*'I'll acknowledge you guys if you do half as much as I do.'*

"Also…" I paused.

"Yes, Father Lee Ki-Young?"

"I would like to ask for your understanding in advance…" I paused again.

"Yes?"

"How about… letting the Federation… clean up the dungeon alone? I would like the Federation to take care… of the maintenance afterward, too," I suggested.

"*Ah…*"

"…"

"Of course… the Continental Protection Management Committee and the Heretic Inquisitors will supervise them," I added.

"*Keugh…* Are you suggesting that we hand this over to the company in the Federation?" one of the members asked.

"That's right," I replied.

*'I really did my best within my power. How much more can I give up?'*

The one who spoke just now was the guy sitting on Jin Cheong's left.

I couldn't remember his name, but he was known to be Jin Cheong's adjutant. Seeing that he had spoken so brazenly without Commander Jin's permission meant that he was a trustworthy individual.

"I'm sorry… but can I tell you my honest opinion?" he asked.

"Sure," I answered.

“Before I begin… I would like to say that I have no intention of belittling the Federation,” he said.

“…”

“I know that Father Lee Ki-Young made that suggestion out of the kindness… of his heart, but personally—*Ahem*, personally… I’m worried about whether the Federation can handle that job. As you all know, the Federation is well…” he paused.

*‘He’s right.’*

“The Mole Saint’s Cozy Sanctuary isn’t an ordinary dungeon, so I believe that through enough discussions and meetings…”

This wasn’t an ordinary job. As he said, if it were a small dungeon, it wouldn’t matter who'd the cleanup duty, but the Underground Temple was basically like a big city. It was questionable if the Federation had the manpower and resources to do that.

He said that he had no intentions of belittling the Federation, but he was obviously belittling them. From a third party’s point of view, these people were probably disgusted by the Federation.

The Federation lacked skills and manpower, and their performance was not exactly noteworthy. They also hadn't provided any decent resources. I was sure people were annoyed because they were profiting for free because the nice and innocent honorary cardinal took pity on them.

*‘Yeah, this is basically a business.’*

We were talking about cleaning up a dungeon as big as a large city. Actually, it could be bigger than a large city. I was basically giving them a large-scale city project or a national project without any conditions.

*‘This is how you create jobs.’*

A specialized company alone would not be enough, so they'd start hiring people, and the Sacred Democratic Country would pay them for their services. The payment would go straight to the safe of the big and small cities in the Federation.

The Federation's economy would improve by leaps and bounds. If they ended up finding items while taking care of the dungeon, they'd talk about their contribution or whatever and claim ownership of some of the items.

The Federation was short on gold, so their people had to take on mercenary work to feed the nation. My words just now were basically declaring them to be the winners of a jackpot, and the pot was even sweeter because they were also responsible for the maintenance of the dungeon.

The figures from the Sacred Democratic Country looked uncomfortable. The mid-sized guilds looked disappointed because they were aiming to take this business for themselves, but they couldn't express their disappointment before me.

"I-If you leave it to us… we'll do our best!"

The man who stood up and bowed was a middle-aged man with a beard rather than the fish who spouted nonsense at the beginning of the meeting.

"We'll show you that we can do it," he added.

The people around him stood up and bowed as well.

"We'll show you that we can do it, Father Lee Ki-Young! If you… leave it to us…"

*'That's the reaction that I'm hoping for.'*

Despite standing up and bowing towards me, they looked nervous because the others could disapprove of my suggestion. That was why they decided to say something as soon as possible. There was no way they'd let go of this opportunity, as this was the only way for their nation to thrive.

“Please lift your head. We need the approval of the others…” I said.

“We… We beg you,” the middle-aged man said.

“What should we—”

“Please, Father Lee Ki-Young!” he shouted.

*‘It doesn’t even take a minute to make someone loyal to you. He’s already loyal to me.’*

I had no choice but to look at Jin Cheong.

I was looking at him as if I were asking him to agree with me.

“I agree,” Jin Cheong said, raising his hand.

“It’s a great idea, Father. If they lack manpower and resources, the Union of Others will provide support,” said Elias, nodding calmly. He agreed with me because he wanted to get close to me.

Their words meant that the majority was basically agreeing with my suggestion.

“The Red Mercenary Guild…”

“The Black Swan Guild also agrees with the Blue Guild,” Park Yeon-Joo said.

“Everyone…”

I’m touched.

“…”

“I also ask that you do your best, everyone,” I said, standing up.

The Saint of Sacrifice and Revival then asked for their understanding.

I managed to convince them using their emotions, but I didn't really need to convince them. I had people I could rely on, after all.

The people who voted yes here wouldn't profit right away, but the honorary cardinal of the Democratic Country, the symbol of the continent, and the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild would owe them a favor.

I believed there were some people here who thought that this was better than cleaning up the dungeon. After all, I wasn't someone who'd forget the kindness of other people, and I'd always return kindness in kind.

"F-Father Lee Ki-Young…"

"Please do your best, everyone," I said.

"Well… since you said it like that…" the middle-aged man mumbled.

"As a member of the Democratic Country… we have no choice but to follow your orders," said someone else in his camp.

"This is for the Federation."

Some people said things that they didn't even mean…

"*Whoo…*"

There were some who sighed as if they had no other choice…

"If that is your wish… we'll follow."

Overall, I felt like the issue was handled beautifully. Of course, the details would still be discussed later.

I noticed some influential figures approaching the members of the Federation to try to get a slice of the pie. I had no intention of stopping them from getting help or hiring subcontractors. How they were going to approach the clean-up was all up to them.

“Thank you, thank you, Father Lee Ki-Young," said the bearded bandit while crying.

I didn't expect that a man of his age would cry so easily.

“Thank you.”

His comrades weren’t all that different.

The fish looked at me as if he had made a decision.

“Father Lee Ki-Young…” said the fish.

“*Ah*, yes, Mr. Squiat?” I answered.

“Do you… have a moment?” the fish asked.

“Excuse me?”

“There's something I have to tell you,” he said.

“…”

“…”

“I only need a moment… It’s very important, Father,” he added.

“I-It should be fine if it’s only for a moment…” I said.

“…”

“Mr. Squiat,” I said.

“Yes?”

“…”

“…”

“Do you know how to play chess?” I asked.

# CHAPTER 1025
# CLEANUP (8)

“I don’t know how… but why…” Squiat asked.

“I don’t really like it when the mood is serious. Playing chess while talking will make it a little easier for us to talk… You also won't have to worry about formalities…” I replied.

“…”

“I think it’s best to talk in a more comfortable setting. It's not good for us to treat our conversation as an extension of the meeting,"

“I see. I appreciate it,” Squiat said.

The same words would have a different meaning depending on the interpretation.

It would be better for him if we were to talk to each other while playing chess instead of talking about the clean-up proceedings of the expedition. He'd attract less attention from the press and the members of the Blue Guild.

*‘An unofficial meeting is a lot better.’*

We wouldn’t need to record this in the meeting log, and I was sure that was what he wanted, so this was actually good for him.

*'Many people noticed us, though.’*

The meeting was over, but the meeting room was rowdy because some people were trying to get some profit from the Federation.

Some people also noticed Squiat walking over toward me. Some of them felt

uncomfortable at the sight and frowned, but they didn't really stop him.

It was all because they could just invite themselves if it seemed like we were going to have a tea party. Unfortunately, I asked Squiat whether he could play chess or not, which meant that they would have no reason to join our conversation.

They knew I was being considerate of Squiat, and it would be rude of them to try to join our conversation despite that.

I felt like they had become more hostile to the fish, as they were worried about the possibility of Squiat stabbing me in the back.

"Thank you for your hard work, everyone," I said.

"Would it be okay if I visit you privately next time, Father Lee Ki-Young?" the bearded man asked.

"Of course. You're welcome to visit me anytime. Let's have tea and enjoy each other's company. *Ah!* I think it's better if I invite you to the tea party that's going to be held soon," I suggested.

"*Hahaha*, really? An invitation to your tea party… I'm already looking forward to it. It will be a family honor," replied the bearded man.

"Maybe I should've invited you sooner," I commented.

"*Hahahaha*, I'm just glad that you even considered inviting me. I'm sure my daughter will be very happy. She's actually going to debut soon…" mentioned the bearded man.

"Debuting at such a trivial tea party…" I said.

"It's not a trivial tea party if it's your tea party! I can already imagine the smiles on my children's faces," said the bearded man.

"*Hahaha*."

Naturally, I talked to those who were leaving and bid goodbye to them.

“Thank you very much for today,” I said.

“I should be the one thanking you, Father Lee Ki-Young. You have no idea how touched I was… by your warm heart and the fact that you're prioritizing the continent.”

I didn’t really mean those things.

“*Ah*, Commander!” I yelled.

“Father Lee Ki-Young,” Jin Cheong said.

“Are you heading back to the Republic?” I asked.

“That’s right,” Jin Cheong replied.

“Why don’t you stay a little longer…” I suggested.

“I have tasks I need to take care of… I apologize,” Jin Cheong said.

“I can’t believe you’re returning so soon…” I said.

“I will make time someday and visit the Blue Guild,” Jin Cheong said.

“You promised,” I said.

“Of course.”

I pretended like I was close to Jin Cheong, and the meeting finally ended.

After a while, we started heading out.

Squiat stared at me quietly all this while.

“Well then…” I said.

“Yes, Father Lee Ki-Young?”

“I think it’s best if we head to my room,” I suggested.

“Yes, sir,” Squiat replied.

I also didn’t forget to notify the guild staffers.

“I have a guest, so please make sure that no one will disturb us.”

“Yes, sir.”

I was ready to talk. Of course, I didn’t forget to show him my ordinary life as the sub guild master and the honorary cardinal. I showed him my life as an ordinary human rather than as the honorary cardinal ordering the guild staffers around.

I took out a chessboard and talked casually to him. I also served him some tea and snacks. It was a familiar routine.

The room was clean with luxurious and antique furniture and items, but I seemed out of place in all of this. Pouring my own tea was something commoners would do, and it looked as if I weren't greedy or materialistic.

It was like the Blue Guild had provided all these to help me maintain my dignity rather than saying that I wanted all these.

“What kind of tea do you like?” I asked.

“I don’t… really enjoy… drinking tea…” Squiat answered.

*‘You’re hopeless.’*

“Then I’ll recommend one to you,” I said.

“I’d appreciate that,” Squiat said.

A chessboard was placed on the large table.

The tea and our snacks were sitting on the side table.

I quietly moved a piece, and he nodded before moving his chess piece. We weren't playing with the intention of winning. Playing chess wasn't important to him… He had come here to tell me what he wanted, so I was sure he was thinking hard right now.

"First of all…" Squiat said.

"Yes?"

"On behalf of the Federation… I would like to thank you for doing everything that you can for us," Squiat continued.

*'That's right. Start off by thanking me first, but it's kind of strange, isn't it? You're not the representative of the Federation, after all.'*

"It's nothing. I should be the one thanking you, Mr. Squiat. I know that the small cities of the Federation are struggling, but I never really managed to confirm. Many people were uncomfortable because your words did not really fit the topic of the meeting. but I understand why you decided to do that," I said.

"Thank you for—"

"So… can you tell me why you requested a private meeting?" I asked, interrupting him.

*'I've already done enough to address the problems that you mentioned.'*

"That's…" Squiat paused.

*'The poverty and the hardships of the people in the Federation were resolved by giving you guys the license to the dungeon. The equal distribution you mentioned was also resolved with the Legendary item that you got.'*

"If there's something else you need, feel free to tell me," I said.

This amount of kindness had to be considered a sickness.

*'Even I think that I'm being really stupid.'*

There probably wasn't another person as nice as me.

Legendary items were so valuable that it was hard to convert them to gold.

Of course, there were many such items on the market right now, so their value had dropped significantly, but they were still extremely expensive. The dungeon maintenance project was good for them, but the items given to the Federation…

*'Those items are going to be helpful with their expedition.'*

Basically, the issues that had been plaguing them due to the fact that they hadn't been able to raid a dungeon or hunt monsters had just been resolved earlier.

The Federation would surely grow as quickly as a rolling snowball, but I knew why he wanted this meeting.

*'He wants more.'*

I had no idea what he wanted… but he probably wanted to know who I was supporting.

"Come to think of it; you're from the small city of Ohio…" I mentioned.

"Yes. I'm still lacking, but I manage the small city of Ohio. Of course, the denizens are helping me as well," Squiat said.

"I see."

His position wasn't bad, but it wasn't exactly the best either.

If he wanted to become a part of the Federation's higher-ups, he could surely

become one. However, there was a major city right next to Ohio, so he probably thought that Ohio was too small for him to fulfill his dreams.

If he wanted to be at the center of the Federation's politics to reform the Federation, then he'd need connections and the help of someone famous.

*'I give you fifty points. It's not bad, but it's not good, either.'*

He probably felt like the bearded bandit had taken credit for his contribution. The presentation was made by him, but the contribution was split between the central and the major cities around it.

*'Or is it something else?'*

*'Do you want to have a Mythic-ranked item all to yourself? Are you really worried about the continent? Do you want to change the continent? Did you really think someone should keep Light Ki-Young in check? Are you here to gamble with me with some grand plan?'*

*'Did you request a private meeting with me because you want to carry out the revolution that you have in mind?'*

Squiat stared quietly at the chessboard.

He was sweating, and I could see through his thoughts. I was sure he knew how difficult it was for a ruler of a small city to have a private meeting with me.

The lovely and holy honorary cardinal was a foolishly kind man, but despite that, Squiat probably felt like he was standing on the edge of a cliff. One word could change everything.

*'There's no way, right?'*

I had thrown multiple hints. A foolishly kind man and a saint who had been living his life for the continent. I had been sacrificing myself to the point that I looked like a fool, but it seemed like he couldn't find any traces of Light Ki-

Young in me.

Squiat had only one choice, and it was explaining exactly what had happened, as I had forgotten some of the events during the expedition.

Squirt wanted to make me feel wary of myself.

He wanted to create a brand-new group that wasn't part of the Blue Guild, the Mercenary Guild, the Black Swan Guild, the Continental Protection Management Committee, and the Sacred Democratic Country.

He wanted to make me an enemy of myself.

Squiat sounded confident as he said, "It's about the Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary."

"Excuse me?"

"Do you know… what happened there?" he asked carefully.

And that was when a shadow appeared behind him…

*'Kim Ye-Ri.'*

Squiat probably wanted to tell me about the dark, hidden truth.

*'Those three must've been taking turns to watch over me.'*

Kim Ye-Ri took out her dagger, and she had a cold look that was unlike a little girl like her. Before Squiat could finish his sentence, a dagger was pressed against his neck, but there weren't any holes in his neck.

"What are you doing, Kim Ye-Ri?" I asked.

"…" "I asked… what you're doing," I repeated.

*'Are you trying to execute him because he broke the contract?'*

The fish fell from his chair and clutched his neck. He looked to be in disbelief. If I hadn't stopped her, his head would have been rolling on the ground by now. The fish was also aware of the fact that he had almost lost his life.

Kim Ye-Ri realized the sad truth once again. Upon seeing my disapproving gaze, her hands trembled, and she ran out while crying.

*'She won't tell Hyun-Sung if she knows what's good for her.'*

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young…"

Squiat proceeded to blabber on and on about the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep.

*Boom!*

There was a deafening noise, and someone walked into the room with bloodshot eyes, looking extremely angry. He'd usually smile like a fool, but he looked like a demon right now.

His frown was so deep that it distorted his face in a hideous way. I couldn't help but question whether I was still staring at the guy I was familiar with. Yes, he was our pig—Park Deok-Gu.

Kim Ye-Ri had decided to call him instead of Kim Hyun-Sung.

"It was you," Park Deok-Gu said.

"Deok-Gu, wait…" I said.

"You ungrateful bastard… You… you… ungrateful… How… could you do that… to our hyung-nim?! How dare you… How dare you!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

*'What's wrong with him?'*

"You're worse than a beast!" Park Deok-Gu added.

*‘What’s wrong with you? What’s going on?’*

“You… You bastard!” Park Deok-Gu roared.

Park Deok-Gu's massive fist landed on the fish’s face, and a grotesque cracking noise echoed.

# CHAPTER 1026
# CLEANUP (9)

*'What's going on?'*

It happened so fast that I couldn't stop him.

*'What's wrong with him? What's wrong?'*

*BOOM!*

The fish was blasted away into a wall. Before he could scream, Park Deok-Gu grabbed his head and slammed him into the wall again. I heard a loud *crack*, but Park Deok-Gu's roar was loud enough to drown out that sound.

He was swearing and crying at the same time.

The scene was so bizarre that I questioned whether I was staring at the Park Deok-Gu I was familiar with. His voice was completely different from his usual voice, and he was so domineering that the fish could not do anything other than cover his face with his hands.

"H-Hold on… *Aahhh!*" Squiat yelled.

*'Looks like our Deok-Gu became stronger.'*

I thought our pig only knew how to get hit, but he was actually pretty strong.

He had grown a lot.

The fish had a warrior-type class, but he couldn't fight back at all.

The fish was a typical melee DPS with balanced stats; his skills and attributes were excellent. In addition, he had to be an Epic adventurer or

higher. Otherwise, he couldn't have reached his current heights.

If he were closer to Legendary than Epic, he would outclass Park Deok-Gu, but that wasn't the case here.

Sword techniques, martial arts techniques, and skills were useless against a tank with extremely high Endurance. There was a massive difference in stats, so Park Deok-Gu's attacks were extremely damaging to him despite the former's low Strength.

Just one fist was enough to render Squiat to the brink of a coma, and the punch that came afterward had to have made it difficult for Squiat to breathe.

I was sure he had already lost his teeth as well.

He was covered in blood because Park Deok-Gu was still punching him.

"How… could you do that?! You bastard! You ungrateful jerk!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

"*Ah… ahhhh!*" Squiat screamed.

"You deserve to die! You… You know nothing!" Park Deok-Gu continued.

"*Cough!*"

"You shouldn't have talked nonsense when you know nothing! Did you really have to do that?! Why?! To feel better about yourself?! You bastard! Do you feel better now, *huh?!*"

"*Keugh…*"

"You dirty, wicked, and shameful bastard!!!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

It all happened in the blink of an eye.

Squiat was using all of his energy to withstand the pig's punches.

*'I do feel kind of better. Yeah, if you're going to punch him, you might as well go all out. Don't show mercy.'*

I felt conflicted. A part of me wanted to keep watching, while the other part of me wanted to stop him. If I could, I'd send Squiat's soul to Benigoa, but…

*'It'll be bad if he ends up dying here… '*

Obviously, I had to stop Park Deok-Gu, so I decided to pull him away.

Park Deok-Gu raised his fist to pound Squiat's head, but I moved quickly and wrapped my arms around his waist, pulling him away.

"Deok-Gu! Park Deok-Gu!"

I called out his name desperately, but he was so immersed that he could not hear me.

"You… dirty bastard! You deserve to die! Our hyung-nim… he… he went through so many hardships! He struggled so much… he's been struggling, but you… you…"

*'Why are you crying?'*

Park Deok-Gu failed to control himself and burst into tears.

*'You're acting as if you're the one who's getting beaten up.'*

"*Haa…* S-save…"

*'Hey, he might actually die at this rate. I think he's really trying to kill the guy.'*

Squiat was writhing in pain, and he couldn't even think about resisting anymore.

He looked like a fish on land.

*'He can't die here. He can't. I need to send him back as an example to others.'*

In the end, I had no choice but to cling to Park Deok-Gu's arm.

Park Deok-Gu failed to notice me, so I flew away when he swung his fist.

I ended up rolling on the ground.

I rolled dramatically to ensure that he'd notice me, and it worked.

"*Ah!*" Park Deok-Gu exclaimed. "*Uh… uh…* hyung-nim?"

"…"

"Hyung-nim…" Park Deok-Gu said.

I needed to be stern with him. I couldn't be nice to the guy who had crossed the line.

"Get out," I said.

My serious voice filled the quiet room, and I was even surprised by how cold I sounded.

I checked up on Squiat before looking up at Park Deok-Gu.

As expected, Park Deok-Gu was looking at me in disbelief. It looked like he had finally come to his senses. He had sent the Saint of Sacrifice rolling on the ground and had pummeled the fish bloody.

"I-I… just…" he stuttered.

"I said get out, you pig!" I ordered.

"I just—"

"You bastard! Who told you to beat him up? Have I ever told you to beat up people you didn't like?" I questioned.

"…"

"What was that? You think I've been taking care of you, so you can do something like this? Does nothing matter to you anymore now that you've gotten stronger? Do you feel better after barging into my room and behaving as you pleased? Do you not care about anything anymore?" I scolded him.

*'I was happy by what he did. I honestly wanted to punch the fish myself. I'm feeling better thanks to the pig.'*

"H-He… he…" Park Deok-Gu muttered.

"I heard what happened as well. I don't understand why that was kept a secret in the first place… but how… how could you act like this… every time…" I complained.

Park Deok-Gu was silent. He had to be too embarrassed to even apologize. He knew what he had done, after all.

*'How dare you beat up my guest?'*

Of course, it was true that Squiat had broken the contract, but the contract hadn't stated anything about being forced to eat knuckle sandwiches upon breaking the contract.

Kim Ye-Ri swinging her dagger was probably a decision by the Blue Guild as a whole, and I was sure the contract that was released to the public was different.

Basically, Park Deok-Gu had done something bad.

Thankfully, I could stop this from becoming a big story because I had influence over the press, but the news of Park Deok-Gu beating up the manager of Ohio to a pulp would cause political issues.

Park Deok-Gu wasn't exactly a political individual, but he was smart enough to know that.

*‘If only the beating weren't this severe… ’’*

Squiat’s political life was going to come to an end on its own because breaking a contract wasn’t an issue that could be resolved easily. However, Park Deok-Gu had run rampant, so Squiat now had a reason to kick up a fuss.

*‘It didn’t really matter, anyway.’*

I was going to end the fish, anyway. I had already planted the seeds, and it would have been great if Park Deok-Gu hadn't beaten him up. Well, it had already happened, so the least I could do was ensure that Squiat wouldn't die at Park Deok-Gu's hands.

In addition, Park Deok-Gu also had no excuse to behave in such a ruthless manner.

“T-That…”

I cast a disappointed gaze at Park Deok-Gu. He received one stack of disappointment upon barging into the room like some thug, and he received another stack of disappointment by behaving in such a violent way.

*‘Are you still the Deok-Gu whom I'm familiar with?’*

*'Are you really the same pig that I know? You weren’t acting like a pig just now. You don’t have anger management issues, do you?'*

I had no choice but to keep acting like I was disappointed with him.

“I was just… w-worried about you… and… more importantly…” Park Deok-Gu paused.

“…”

“H-He…” Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

“You…” I paused.

"…"

"You disappoint me… *really…"* I said.

Park Deok-Gu cried.

"Sniff!"

*'Don't cry. Why are you crying?'*

"Get out," I said.

"*Sob… sob…"*

He couldn't move.

"I said get out! You pig!" I shouted.

I felt kind of bad for him when I saw him standing there and wiping away his tears.

I'd feel uncomfortable leaving like this… Actually, I couldn't leave just like this. Unlike him, I had to keep doing my job. First, I had to check if Squiat was still alive… and sprinkle a bit of holy power on him.

Once I was done, I had to call a priest.

The pig just stood there with his head down. Blood was still dripping from his hands, and the sight bothered me. I was sure he wasn't hurt because of his exceedingly high Endurance stat, but…

"*Keugh…"*

*'Ah, it's really bothering me.'*

"Give me… your hand," I said.

"…"

I took out a bottle of potion from my bag and poured it over his hand.

“Hey… I’m sorry…” Park Deok-Gu mumbled.

“Don’t do this next time,” I said.

“But still…”

"Hey, listen.”

“…”

“Don’t tell Hyun-Sung either, and make sure that Ye-Ri won't tell anyone about what happened. You know why I’m acting like this, right? It’s because I don’t want this to become a big problem,” I told him.

“B-but hyung-nim… about what happened during the Bahamut expedition… that was—”

“Yeah, I know. It’s not a big deal, is it?” I interrupted him.

“That’s right. It wasn’t a big deal, so don’t worry about it. I'm not sure what he told you… but it really wasn’t a big deal. It’s not something you have to worry yourself over, and it’s all over now. I’m telling you that you don’t need to worry or carry the burdens alone."

*'You say it’s not a big deal, but you barged in here and went crazy. Does that even make sense?'*

“All right, thanks,” I said.

“A-Also, I’m sorry. I—”

“Just don’t do it again next time, so leave this place to me and go rest,” I interrupted him.

“I can’t…”

“I’ll take care of it, so you go take care of Ye-Ri,” I said.

*‘Even if you stay here, there’s nothing you can do.’*

“At least—”

“Get out,” I ordered.

He finally caught on and left the room quietly.

*‘Ah, shit… it really is a mess.’*

I felt like I was just hit by a tornado.

The unconscious Squiat before me made me feel extreme delight, but I couldn’t show it because Park Deok-Gu and Kim Ye-Ri were peeking in through the slightly ajar door.

I sighed and showed them my back.

My shoulders were trembling as if I were dealing with my tumultuous emotions.

*‘I’m suffering like this because of you guys. Yeah, you two—Ye-Ri and Park Deok-Gu.’*

Only accomplished actors could act with their backs turned on their audience.

After wiping away my tears, I opened the communication channel.

*"Benigoa."*

—…

*"Benigoa?"*

— *Huh? Ah!* I-I’m here! Lee Ki-Young! I-I was just taking care of the work that

had piled up. W-Why are you calling me?

*"Let me borrow your spear."*

—…

*"You know, the spear. The one you're using as a decoration… Let me borrow it."*

— *Huh? Huh? The* spear? My… spear? Why?

*'What do you mean, why? They'll find your relic during the dungeon cleanup, and I expect them to find it thirty days from now.'*

# CHAPTER 1027
# CLEANUP (10)

"…"

"Please continue, Colonel Smith," I said.

"I have heard the name Squiat before, sir," Colonel Smith said.

"Really?" I asked.

"Yes. Right after clearing the tutorial dungeon, I'm sure he was called one of the Supernovas of the West. I believe his nickname was Squiat, the Blinding Light…" he answered.

"Supernovas of the West?" I asked.

"Yes. It refers to the eight people of the Federation and the Union," Colonel Smith said.

"…"

"…"

"*Hm*… they must not be *that* big of a deal since I've never heard of them…" I said.

"That's the case based on the standards of the entire continent, but the people of the Federation are saying that the Supernovas of the West are powerful people. They actually started out from scratch," Colonel Smith explained.

"That's true. Anyway, since you've heard of them, they must not be completely incompetent. You're saying that it wouldn't be strange if I was to

support them personally, right?" I asked.

"That's right. I already told the press that this is a continuation of the Federation Support Project. I also informed them that along with Squiat, the remaining Supernovas of the West as well as the small to mid-sized guilds of the Federation, are receiving support from us. The press and the guild master have yet to catch on, too," Colonel Smith answered.

"And the incident with Deok-Gu…" I asked.

"That incident won't be mentioned outside of the guild," Colonel Smith replied.

"I knew you were great at your job, Colonel Smith. I'm glad I recruited you. You're reliable and trustworthy," I complimented him.

"Thank you, sir. But…" Colonel Smith paused.

"Yes?"

"Can I ask you a question?" he asked.

I felt like I knew what he was going to ask, so answering his question in advance would probably put him at ease.

"*Ah*, I won't do anything to the Federation, so don't worry so much. I'll use this opportunity to take care of your former comrades, Colonel Smith. Once we get rid of the scumbags, those positions will be available. You're okay with that, right?" I asked.

I thought he'd be happy, but his expression turned kind of dark.

*'Strangely, he prefers living a quiet life, and he even wants his subordinates to do the same.'*

It was ironic because he couldn't give up his mustache, even though he wanted to stay low-key.

Anyway, it sounded like the incident was handled without much fuss. Of course, I had made a personal agreement with Squiat, but there were many other things I had to handle in addition to our agreement.

Actually, Squiat didn't want the continent to become noisy all because of what Park Deok-Gu had done. He actually stopped me when I told him that I wanted to apologize formally. Instead, he requested for protection.

It made sense, as his life was threatened, after all.

However, he also wanted me to do something about the expedition contract, which was an even bigger problem. Of course, there was nothing for him to worry about because I knew the truth and had to take action.

It was a ridiculous contract in the first place, and when looking at it objectively, Squiat was a courageous whistleblower who had revealed the unfair contract terms.

He was lying on the hospital bed while I was sitting next to him.

Everything was going according to plan.

The fact that Park Deok-Gu and Kim Ye-Ri were so overprotective of me gave him an excuse. He begged me to believe him and claimed that we needed to establish an organization that would keep the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep in check.

I told him that it would be nice if the Blue Guild could come up with a way, but I also told him the cold truth that we couldn't do that and that supporting the Federation was the best option.

I was sure he felt ashamed for saying that to me in the first place.

*'He got beaten up by Park Deok-Gu, after all, so he must be feeling ashamed.'*

Basically, his face was red while we were talking.

He was probably mad at himself for bringing that up again after getting beaten up by the pig for bringing it up in the first place. He had never experienced major failures, and I was sure his pride had plummeted to the abyss after the incident.

We had many discussions about it, but in the end, I still decided to support the people of the Federation and the Union under the Federation Support Project.

Actually, I was planning on supporting only Squiat and a few others, but I had to do this so that the continent wouldn't notice what was going on.

It happened exactly five days ago. Squiat had finally recovered to a certain extent, so he stood up and immediately created a branch in Lindel. Then, they received a large amount of funding. I had to say that Squiat really was a motivated individual.

“Mr. Chang-Ryeol, how much longer until we reach our destination?” I asked.

“We’re almost there, sir,” Lee Chang-Ryeol answered.

“This is hard…” I mumbled.

“Would you like me to carry you?” Lee Chang-Ryeol asked.

“No, it’s fine… but… I had no idea that there's a building in a place like this,” I answered.

“The guild master actually purchased a few buildings under your name,” Lee Chang-Ryeol revealed.

“There’s more? Where did he get all that money from?” I questioned.

“…” *‘Maybe I shouldn’t have asked.’*

Upon reaching the building I had never seen before, I saw the fish from the Federation.

He was still injured, but he was dressed decently today.

“Welcome, Father Lee Ki-Young.”

“I’m sorry for being late, Mr. Squiat,” I said.

“*Haha*, you don’t need to apologize. Thank you for coming all this way. It’s also an honor to meet you, Colonel Smith. Please come this way,” Squiat said.

“…”

“I’ll head in with you, sir,” Lee Chang-Ryeol said.

“Thank you, Mr. Chang-Ryeol.”

*‘He must’ve spent quite a bit of money.’* This was the first thought that popped into my mind the moment I entered his guild house under Lee Chang-Ryeol and Colonel Smith's protection.

He was a mosquito, not a fish.

*‘He must have established a branch in Lindel to suck as many profits as possible.’*

First of all, I told him that I'd provide him with a ton of support, but I couldn't understand why he needed so much money until now. There was something expensive everywhere I looked—from the guild house to even the dungeon auction hall—everything was unnecessarily luxurious.

“As I mentioned earlier… I want to introduce you to people who share the same interests as us,” Squiat said.

“Sure.”

“They’re all gathered in the meeting room,” Squiat informed.

“More importantly, are you feeling better, Mr. Squiat?” I asked.

“You don’t have to worry about me,” Squiat replied.

*'Look at this guy trying to act tough. His friends must enjoy acting tough, just like him.'*

We were having meaningless talks while walking toward our destination. Once we were there, I saw a total of fourteen people. In addition to the members of Supernova or whatever, there had to have been some mosquitoes that gathered upon catching a whiff of blood.

They were all wearing fancy clothes and were trying their best to show that they were strong. Actually, they *looked* strong. Their overall stats were Epic or above, and they wore equipment that was suitable for them.

They were good enough to make a living in either Lindel or Celia.

“Nice to meet you, everyone,” I greeted.

“It’s nice to meet you, Father Lee Ki-Young.”

“It’s an honor to meet you, Father Lee Ki-Young.”

“We’re grateful that you came all the way here.”

“Regarding our offer…”

“This is Raynan of Extinction, a member of the Supernovas of the West,” Squiat introduced.

“It’s nice to meet you, Mr. Rayan,” I greeted.

“This is Robinwood of Frenzy. He’s also a Supernova of the West,” he said.

“I’ve heard a lot about you, Mr. Robinwood,” I said.

Greeting each and every one of them was a lot of work, as there were fourteen of them with their own fancy nicknames. They were all acting as if

they were big shots. I knew that they did not want to disappoint their sponsor, but they were trying *too* hard.

*'So these guys can stop the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep? Really?'*

Lee Chang-Ryeol was quiet, but I felt like he was laughing inside. This was just absurd.

"Is this everyone?" I asked.

"If we summon all the members from each guild, there are going to be over a thousand people. Among them, there are about four hundred and twenty-three Epic adventurers; they all have a ton of experience when it comes to raid expeditions.

"They achieved excellent results as part of an attack team in the tutorial dungeon, and they're veteran warriors with a lot of combat experience," Squiat replied.

"I see. A lot of people gathered here. Don't you agree, Mr. Chang-Ryeol?" I asked.

"To be honest…" Lee Chang-Ryeol paused.

"Yes?"

"It's subpar."

An awkward air descended upon the room.

"…"

"It sounds rude, but that's all I can say, sir. They're all subpar," Lee Chang-Ryeol added.

He was so straightforward.

“*Ha… haha*. That’s funny. Excuse me, Father Lee Ki-Young.”

How many adventurers could withstand such words?

I saw the mosquito of annihilation moving toward Lee Chang-Ryeon, and I couldn't help but think that he was raring to prove Lee Chang-Ryeol wrong.

Colonel Smith pulled me back, and Lee Chang-Ryeol’s dagger was pressed at the mosquito's neck in the blink of an eye. The mosquito of annihilation stopped dead in his tracks and glanced at Lee Chang-Ryeol, who somehow appeared behind him in the blink of an eye.

Cold beaded sweat rolled down his forehead.

The mosquito was so slow that he didn’t even notice Lee Chang-Ryeol's attack.

I couldn’t help but sigh. If I were an actual investor, I would pack my bags and leave. No matter how I looked at it, this stock was on the brink of getting delisted. It was a risky stock that would fall into the abyss without fail.

“We still have a long way to go. F-For now… I think it’s best if you help with cleaning up the dungeon with the denizens of the Federation. There’s no need for a… welcome party.

"Yes… okay. *Ah…* I think stabilization should be the top priority…” I suggested.

“…”

“I think it’s best to handle the problems in front of us first before distributing anything or assigning people for expeditions. I think it’s best… if I tell you the direction you should take. I need to talk about how to lead this group, so… for now, please do your best… in your respective roles,” I continued.

“…”

“Mr. Squiat,” I said.

“Y-Yes, Father Lee Ki-Young?” Squiat answered.

“Your words are still engraved deep in my heart, but…” I paused.

*‘I don’t know what you’re planning on doing that you’re taking all this money away from me. This will get you nowhere. This isn’t right even in your eyes, right?’*

“I have a lot I want to say…” I paused again.

*'I don’t know if investing in you guys is the right choice.'*

“But I don’t think this is the place for it,” I said.

Wouldn’t it be faster to find other people?

*‘You understand what I’m saying, right?’*

To be frank, the reason I chose Squiat was that he was a passionate individual. He had courageously brought up the idea of keeping the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep in check and had asked me to give him that job.

He had the spirit and guts of most rookies.

There was really no reason for him to be the leader of the group. This was still an unofficial group, and the level of adventurers in other places was pretty much the same as them. It was true that he started all this, but there was no need for me to give him everything he wanted to obtain.

He knew better than anyone else that his confident, gutsy, and energetic side was not really necessary. He knew better than anyone that he needed to prove his worth in front of me.

*‘He doesn’t look so good.’*

Squiat had an inferiority complex, or perhaps he was just embarrassed. Most importantly, he looked nervous and scared. He looked different from when he was in the meeting room at the time. I could no longer see the passionate Squiat.

*'It's not because they can't that the others are not acting like you.'*

*'They are competent and can certainly make the same move as you, but they are not going to do what you have done because they have a lot to lose.*

*'So what do you think? Now you have a lot to lose as well.'*

# CHAPTER 1028
# CLEANUP (11)

Of course, it wasn’t like Squiat had nothing to lose.

He was the lord of a small city, so anyone would think that he had many valuable things to lose, but value was always relative. There were people satisfied with what they had, but there were also those who weren't. He was a great example of this, and his nature…

*‘Cautious Revolutionist is his nature, and… ’*

The status window would never lie. Unlike Sun Hee-Young’s nature, "Ideal Volunteer," and Kim Hyun-Sung’s nature, "Kind-hearted Mediator," it wasn’t clear whether Squiat's nature was evil or good.

The dictionary definition of the word "revolution" was to break down social and economic systems in favor of a new one, but the definition was not enough for me to say that he was on the side of light.

The existing systems and customs weren’t necessarily bad, and there was no guarantee that the revolution was headed in the right direction or that it was righteous.

There were times when people would raise a flag for the greater good, but there were also people who started a revolution by thinking, *'Ah, this is shit.'*

Squiat was probably the latter.

It was highly likely that he had decided to start a revolution, as he wasn’t satisfied with his life. He had a cause, but what he wanted to change wasn’t the existing values or the current social system. Instead, he simply wanted to change his environment.

He was trapped in a remote area and was being squeezed out of the continental fight for supremacy. To make matters worse, everyone was focused on me and the Sacred Democratic Country. He was frustrated by that; the systems and ideas running the continent had forced the Cautious Revolutionist not to be so cautious anymore.

“Wait, Father Lee Ki-Young," Squiat said, stopping me. I turned to him and saw that he looked nervous. He looked like someone who had a lot to lose. He probably didn’t feel like he was being pushed to the edge of a cliff just yet, but he was scared.

“I trust you, Mr. Squiat,” I said.

“What?”

“I want to take care of you and support you in many ways… but I *need* to see results. I don't have the justification to just give you items, and even if I were to force that to support you… it’ll be an unofficial support. Anything unofficial will not help you at all,” I explained.

“Yes, I understand that, but if you can give us a little more time—”

“I know that an adventurer’s growth depends not just on their items. I know that it sounds ridiculous to hear such words from someone who gave up their life as an adventurer, but I've been observing many adventurers from the sideline.

"In other words, I know that it's important to move forward slowly, one step at a time, rather than being obsessed with the results,” I interrupted him.

“It won’t take that long, Father Lee Ki-Young. So please—”

“*Whooo…* I’m not an idiot, Mr. Squiat,” I said, interrupting him again.

“…”

I needed to talk calmly. I didn’t talk to him coldly or in a tone that implied the

fact that I was aware of his scheme. It was more like I was talking to him indifferently.

I smiled quietly, and I was sure there was kindness in my eyes because the Saint of Sacrifice and Revival was destined to love everyone on the continent.

Squiat was a scumbag, but I had to love him as well.

“Excuse me?” Squiat questioned.

“I said… I’m not an idiot, Mr. Squiat,” I repeated.

“I don’t understand… why you’re telling me this,” Squiat said.

“I’m telling you that I don’t really care about what you do with my support. I also don't really care about what you want or your dreams,” I clarified.

“I think there’s a misunderstanding, Father Lee Ki-Young. That’s not—”

“The reason I wanted to support you was that I thought you'd be able to help everyone keep the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep in check and for the sake of the continent's balance, which would allow us to perhaps adopt a centralized system.

"It was all for the sake of a better tomorrow. I thought there was a reason why Goddess Benigoa sent you to me, and of course, that thought hasn’t changed,” I interrupted him.

Squiat seemed to be having many thoughts as he looked at me quietly.

In the beginning, I was sure that it wasn’t his intention to take advantage of me.

He had to have thought that covering his ambitions by coming up with a cause was a great move for him, but based on his nature, it was hard to say that he was looking down on me. He probably thought that this was a gamble, and it paid off in his eyes.

I was more kind to him than he thought, and he was probably thinking that he had overestimated me.

However, my indifferent words had to have given him goosebumps

*'This is a memorable scene.'*

I couldn't care less whether Squiat was a righteous person or not.

Of course, I also couldn't care less if he was just trying to satisfy his greed.

There was only one thing that mattered to me.

*'The continent… '*

The continent was my priority, and this was the thought process of a transcendent being. Rather than becoming interested in the values of ordinary people, I was looking at the bigger picture with a bird's eye view.

People like Squiat would not be able to understand me. How could he understand the feelings of the transcendent Saint of Sacrifice and Revival when he had used the excuse of changing the values of the continent to cover his greed?

I was the model example of an adult. In my eyes, everything was worthless unless they could help the living beings on this continent. I probably seemed really out of place to the point that people questioned if I was even of the same species as them.

This was kind of different, but Squiat was looking at me like how I'd look at Benigoa.

"…"

"…"

"Well then, I'll put my faith in you, Mr. Squiat," I said, grabbing his hand.

I held his hand tightly before telling him again that I had faith in him.

“Yes, sir.” He lowered his head quietly. I hadn't said anything, but he had to have realized the possibility that I might abandon him if he couldn't prove himself.

I was sure he wanted to ignore that feeling, but…

*‘I knew this was going to happen, so I set up a meeting with the bearded bandit to stress you out.’*

It was easier to bring down someone with a lot to lose than someone who had nothing to lose.

“Mr. Chang-Ryeol,” I said.

“Yes, sir?” Lee Chang-Ryeol answered.

“What does my schedule look like today?” I asked.

“You have a tea party with the guild master. The guild master has requested a discussion related to that picnic. I believe he wants to discuss the theme and the location. He said he wanted to invite professionals and…”

*‘He’s still planning out that picnic?’*

“Did you hear any information about it? I'm talking about the theme,” I asked.

“He seemed to be considering a camping theme. I saw him buying a few tents that are popular throughout the continent, but other than that…” Lee Chang-Ryeol trailed off.

“*Ah*, the minorities in the southern region…” I said.

“It seemed like he was researching the lifestyle of ancient elven nobles as well as the lifestyle of the people living in the wilderness. Aside from that, I

have no other information to offer, unfortunately. My apologies, sir," Lee Chang-Ryeol added.

"No, you don't have to apologize for that," I told him.

"Afterwards, you'll be eating with Miss Jung Ha-Yan, Miss Han Sora, and Mr. Seraphim. After that, you promised to visit the Red Mercenary Guild…" Lee Chang-Ryeol continued.

"And the next day?" I asked.

"There will be an event at the sanctuary," Lee Chang-Ryeol answered.

"*Hm…* I think it's best if we postpone the meeting with Hyun-Sung. It's not like we're going to go to a picnic soon. I've already rescheduled my plan with Ha-Yan once. I think it's best if I meet the bearded bandit… right now," I said.

"Yes, sir. I'll take care of it," Lee Chang-Ryeol said.

"Isn't he working right now? Maybe it's better if I visit the capital myself," I suggested.

"Should I notify him?" Lee Chang-Ryeol asked.

"No."

It was better to do something like this in a discreet way, as the other party would be more touched upon hearing of it.

I was walking with a spring in my steps when I noticed a carriage in the distance.

Lee Chang-Ryeol had to have prepared a carriage because I said that I was tired.

"You get in as well, Colonel Smith," I said.

“Yes, sir.”

“You’re really popular in the Federation, Colonel Smith. You’re perfect as the face of our guild. Don’t you agree?” I asked.

As soon as I got on the carriage, I looked around using my Telescope.

I peeked at Squiat and saw that he was in the middle of a meaningless meeting. The mood was pretty calm, but when he heard that the carriage was heading toward the warp gate, the air in the room instantly turned cold.

*"It looks like… he’s heading towards the capital."*

*"You don’t think he’s going to visit Gregory, do you?"*

So the bearded bandit’s name was Gregory.

"*Whoo…* Damn it. What should we do? If Lee Ki-Young is going to support Gregory…”

*'You were supposed to call me, "Father."'*

*"He can't abandon us that easily."*

*'No, I can.'*

*"But the situation just now was really… Didn’t Lee Ki-Young look really disappointed? Our target… was just an ordinary member of the Blue Guild…”*

*"You really think an ordinary member of the Blue Guild can become Lee Ki-Young’s bodyguard? Do you really think that he’s just an ordinary guild member? Lee Chang-Ryeol is not just popular. His name can be heard everywhere in the underworld, and there isn’t anyone who doesn’t know his name at this point.*

*"There are even stories about him receiving special training to protect Lee Ki-Young along with a woman named Park Lian…”*

*'Really?'*

*"Apparently, his body count is already over one thousand."*

*'Really?'*

*"What about Park Lian?"*

*"Colonel Smith is with him, so I don't think Park Lian is with them. I don't even want to imagine it, but there's a chance that she was in the meeting room with him. Anyway, they're on a completely different level, so let's not treat them based on the standards of the Federation.*

*"We're just starting out. We couldn't even… do anything when Raynan was under attack."*

*"Shit! If only the Federation didn't become like this… If the Federation had received better support, the nation wouldn't have fallen to this state. They're not even t*hat *big of a deal…"* Raynan remarked.

*"Calm down, Raynan. Now is not the time to let your emotions take over."*

*"That bastard Colonel Smith… he looks like a hero, but he's no hero of the Federation. Damn it. Since when did the guy who kissed Lee Ki-Young's feet become the hero of the Federation? Huh? He's just Lee Ki-Young's lap dog."*

*'So Colonel Smith isn't that popular… in the Federation.'*

*"Wheeew… I just received some news."*

*"What is it?"*

*"It looks like he* really *is heading to the dungeon. I'm sure… he's going to meet Gregory."*

I had no idea where I was going, so it was a miracle that they knew my destination.

“Have we arrived?” I asked.

“Yes.”

The carriage door was opened, and I saw the bearded bandit covered in dirt.

My visit was so sudden that he couldn't clean himself up and just welcomed me in that state. He looked like he was working at the frontline, which wasn’t something a guild master overseeing both a guild and a city would normally do.

It was understandable, though, as they lacked manpower.

A terrible stench filled my nose along with the smell of his sweat, but…

*‘He’s working hard.’*

“F-Father Lee Ki-Young. What brings you to this humble place…” Gregory greeted me.

I stepped forward, and he flinched before unconsciously stepping backward. He hadn't moved back out of shock. It was all because he realized that he smelled bad and was dirty.

He stepped back because he was worried about staining my clothes.

*‘The sweat shed from working is sacred.’*

I hugged him lightly as if I were telling him that I couldn't care less about that. I also grabbed his hand and said, “Thank you very much for your hard work."

“Father Lee Ki-Young…” Gregory mumbled.

I really liked this guy.

I wasn’t sure whether this news was delivered to Squiat or not, but I saw him

throwing a chair into the nearest wall through my Telescope.

# CHAPTER 1029
# CLEANUP (12)

*'That's what I'm talking about. You should be showing that you're working hard.'*

That would give me strength as well.

"I'm sorry. I-I didn't expect you to visit… this rundown place…" Gregory said.

"Nonsense. This isn't a rundown place," I said.

"If I had known that you were coming, I would have—"

"Don't say that, Mr. Gregory. I'm really happy that you welcomed me with open arms. I'm actually worried that perhaps I'm being rude for visiting on short notice," I said, interrupting him.

"That's not true! That's not true at all! I'm really happy that you're here. I'm sure your presence here will give strength to everyone," he said.

"…"

"…"

"So, are we just going to stand here?" I jokingly suggested.

Gregory was taken aback, and he stuttered, "P-P-Please… come… inside."

"Okay."

I quickly figured out why he made me stand here.

*'There's no place to sit down.'*

I was sure they had shelters for the workers, but they had no place for special visitors. It had only been three days since they officially started cleaning up the place, and their guild master was also helping, so there was no need to create a place like that.

*'Why would they even need to create a room for special guests?*

I was sure the jerks of the Federation were reluctant to come here, so the people who had come here to help could be considered the hard-working people of the Federation.

I wasn't sure whether there was a political agenda behind Gregory and the influential figures of the Federation, but it seemed that there wasn't anything of that sort. It was also proven by the state of the camp.

*'They're just poor.'*

They lacked time, manpower, and resources, so they couldn't build a decent camp.

It was probably because they wanted to get this started as soon as possible, but I could not see a proper resting area. I saw a cafeteria and housing for the workers, but those were basically just tents.

The mages had no time to cast wind spells to ventilate the place, so I assumed that they hadn't been able to cast any cleaning spells as well. In other words, the bathroom in this place had to smell like the sewers.

*'At least they have a place exclusive for their leaders.'*

Gregory seemed to be thinking that there was no other place for us to go, as the cafeteria and the compound where the workers were staying weren't exactly in pristine condition.

Gregory brought up many topics as if trying to stall time as much as possible, and as expected, I saw a few young men leaving the compound where the leaders of the dungeon clean-up group were staying.

I instantly deduced that those men had to have come here to clean up the place.

“I-It’s filthy, but…”

“It’s not that bad,” I told him.

*‘No, it’s actually bad.’*

They managed to clean up all the trash, but there was no way they could make things perfect on short notice. I found it hilarious to see a clean white fabric draped over a decent-looking table.

The area where the bed was supposed to be located was covered awkwardly, and the random plants in the corners were just funny.

The guest room was clearly made at the last minute, but the sight of it made the bearded bandit sigh in relief. However, he was still worried.

I was famous for always taking the side of the weak and the hardworking workers, so the bearded bandit was worried that I'd scold him for not making a decent working environment for the people here.

However, he need not worry about those. The sweat covering his forehead made me understand what was going on at the moment.

“In my defense—*Ahem…* we had to start working as quickly as possible, so we haven't been able to set up camp. Once manpower and resources start coming in, we're planning on resuming the construction of the camp. The cafeteria, bathroom, the housing compound, and the resting areas will be prioritized," Gregory remarked.

“…”

“It’ll probably take us about ten days. We're already talking to a company, and they told us that it'll take them some time to get things ready. They’ll start sending us decent food in three days,” Gregory added.

*‘You really think they’re going to send you decent food?’*

“You don’t have to give excuses, Mr. Gregory. I know the Federation isn’t in the best situation right now. I know that you have no choice but to rely on those companies, and the amount of money you can spend on them is limited.

"I’m sure there aren’t any guilds in the Federation who can provide enough resources for *this* many people. The denizens are even struggling to get food, and there was also the recent famine,” I replied.

“…”

“Now, I'm thinking that perhaps maybe this is my fault. I'm sure you must've been surprised, and I gave you… this job without considering those things. I should’ve made a solid plan. At this point, it feels like I’ve burdened you and the people. *Whew,*” I said.

“That’s not true, Father Lee Ki-Young. I really am thankful for your grace. I can't express it properly, but I really am… thankful that you blessed us with your grace. This is not your fault, so please lift your head,” Gregory replied.

“If I could, I'd send you support in the name of the Sacred Democratic Country or the Continental Protection Management Committee, but you know better than anyone that it's useless.

"There are people saying that the Federation has been receiving an excessive amount of resources. If you want to increase the denizens’ pride, self-esteem, and morale, you need to take care of this task by yourself,” I explained.

“…”

“…” “It’ll be a difficult time for everyone, including the denizens and the workers here,” I added.

“…”

“I’m sorry I can’t be of much help, Mr. Gregory,” I said.

“It’s fine. You—If it hadn't been for you… we would have had no chance to start over again,” Gregory said.

“Then how about we take a look around?” I suggested.

“Yes, sir! I’ll show you around,” Gregory answered.

I already knew what I was going to see.

“Our plan is to start from basement floor one. Once we're done with that, we'll proceed with the deeper floors. We’re also in the middle of laying down the foundation for the maintenance work, but we’re doing our best so that we won't fall behind at our main objectives.

"Of course, safety is paramount, so there are always soldiers and mages on standby in case of emergencies,” Gregory explained.

“I see. Then how about the protection spells?”

“They're running around the clock, including break times. As I said, safety is paramount,” Gregory answered.

“Do you already have a complete plan for this dungeon cleanup?” I asked.

“Not yet, but we’re in the middle of laying down the foundation so that we can start working as soon as possible.

We’ve been doing things like clearing the road for our supply lines and cleaning up debris. Of course, we haven't discarded the debris, as I assumed that they have religious value,” Gregory answered.

“How about the restoration project?” I asked.

“I actually wanted to talk to you about that. There are some talented people in the Federation who are suitable for that project,” Gregory told me.

“Really?”

“Yes. They’re not famous on the continent, but they’re very thorough. Even the dwarves have acknowledged their work,” Gregory added.

*‘Look at him promoting those guys.’*

“The theologians of the Vatican seemed really satisfied as well. Sister Jayna especially—”

“*Huh?* Sister Jayna?” I asked.

“Yes.”

Gregory was going all out.

They had to take special care when it came to the debris field, but they had no machines capable of handling such heavy debris, so they had to employ adventurers and mages.

Gregory had to have been dispatched here for that.

For some reason, he looked worried while talking to me.

“You can go ahead,” I told him.

“*Ahem*… excuse me,” Gregory said.

It turned out that he was worried about the workers struggling to move a giant rock.

Gregory grabbed the rock with both hands and started moving it away.

It would be a shame if I refrained from doing anything in a situation like this, so I had to use my tiny hands to help them out.

Others would probably think that I was just baggage, but the sight of high-ranking people shedding sweat from labor was always a beautiful sight.

At some point, I started sweating with them.

“Oh no… Father Lee Ki-Young. It’s dangerous!”

“What?” I asked.

“Please… Please come this way,”

“But… isn’t there anything I can help out with?” I asked.

“Excuse me for saying this, but staying still is helping us. *Ahem… ahem…*”

“…”

I laughed off the blunt words of the elderly workers and created an atmosphere that emphasized teamwork. Lee Chang-Ryeol was filming us. This beautiful sight was an excellent promotional video; I just had to put some dirt on my face, and it'd be perfect.

*‘I wasn’t planning on going this far.’*

It was a good topic for conversation, and the situation was just a chef's kiss, so I couldn’t let this opportunity pass.

*‘I want to stop. My arms… they're in pain… '*

I glanced at Colonel Smith, but this was his first time as my assistant, so he couldn't understand my signal at all. I wanted him to pull me out of this hellish labor. It was a universal law for assistants to walk up to their employer and whisper something along the lines of—“You have an upcoming meeting, and you must leave now, sir.”

If he were to do that for me, I'd leave immediately.

*‘Shit. It’s hot and humid. Did they not cast a cooling spell at all? Or did they cast one, but it’s really weak?’*

“I think we’re pretty much done here, Father Lee Ki-Young,” Gregory informed me.

“I want to help a bit more,” I said.

Gregory was the one trying to stop me, so I couldn't rest. Just as I was starting to think that perhaps Colonel Smith was trying to make me suffer, unexpected guests arrived and saved me from this quagmire of hellish labor.

*‘I was just wondering where they were.’*

The blood-sucking mosquitoes had come. I was talking about the senators of the Federation, whom I was sure had never visited this place until now.

“Father Lee Ki-Young, the senators are here, and they want to meet you,” Colonel Smith said.

“*Ah…* I have guests?”

“They also said that they want to talk to you about the dungeon cleanup,” he added.

“Thank you, Colonel Smith,” I said.

To make things worse…

*‘Why are you guys here?’*

Squiat’s group was with them.

*‘These bastards are all evil.’*

Gregory clearly looked uncomfortable at the sight of them all. At this point, the senators ought to come forward with the Supernovas and jokingly say, “So you’re here as well, Father?”

However, this wasn’t the best time to make jokes. Who could have known

that the mosquitoes would come here with them?

They looked so clean and neat that it was absurd.

The way Squiat's group and the senators were sitting on a chair while waiting for me with their assistants made them look extremely out of place. The two groups weren't sitting together, but they had a similar manner of speech.

Gregory was left clearing his throat from the awkwardness.

"Father Lee Ki-Young. You never told us that you'd visit…" one of the senators said shamelessly.

However, Squiat remained silent. He probably couldn't bring himself to say anything, as he found it embarrassing. He seemed to be thinking that he'd receive the same treatment as the senators if he were to say something here.

I turned around and stared at the bearded bandit.

I had no choice but to say something upon seeing his face.

"Mr. Gregory."

"Yes, Father Lee Ki-Young?" Gregory asked.

"What kind of role have they been assigned for the dungeon cleanup?" I asked.

*'Tell me because I don't know… '*

"Excuse me?" Gregory asked, sounding dumbfounded.

*'I don't know anything at all.'*

I really sounded like I had no idea about what was going on.

# CHAPTER 1030
# CLEANUP (13)

It sounded like an innocent question, and I *obviously* hadn't asked that question to speak ill of the people here.

I spoke in a delighted way, or at least, that was how I felt.

How could I not be happy when so many people had come here to help the struggling Federation? I was moved upon seeing the senators of the Federation and those with power sweating together with the workers here.

However, the touching moment didn’t last long.

The bearded bandit looked embarrassed.

Actually, it was more like he had no idea what to say. I was sure he didn’t want to show the bad side of the Federation, so he felt the need to say something, but nothing came to his mind.

He also couldn’t give a reasonable excuse, so he could only say, "The… senators have given us material and emotional support…”

“…”

“They provided support to the workers… and…” Gregory paused.

*'They provided full support? Where?'*

Gregory seemed to have realized that he had made a mistake.

“I mean, they *did* provide their full support. We just haven’t… received… I mean, we’re going to receive their support soon…” Gregory mumbled.

"…"

"*Ah*, they helped with many of the legal procedures," Gregory added.

"*Ah*, the legal procedures. What exactly were those procedures?" I asked.

That's when one of the senators joined the conversation.

"*Hahaha.* It looks like Master Gregory isn't aware of the details yet. There are visa issues whenever workers from the Sacred Democratic Country enter the Federation and vice-versa. The committee is in the middle of talking about resolving those issues."

"I see," I said.

"The laws of the Federation vary slightly depending on the region, which is why the administrative process is a bit complicated. As you already know, the guilds of the Federation are the ones who have received the task of cleaning up the dungeon.

"However, each guild is subject to the laws of their respective regions, so there are many things to handle," said one of the senators.

"*Ah…*"

"If the task was assigned to… the Central Government of the Federation…" he trailed off.

*'He's crazy.'*

*'Why would I assign the task to you guys? It's not like you participated in the dungeon raid. To make things worse, you guys have no shame. How come this guy still has the face to jump into the conversation when I'm obviously humiliating them?'*

The Democratic Country had commissioned the guilds in the Federation, not the government. As he said, there were many things to handle. Almost all the

guilds in the Federation had decided to participate in this task, but even that wasn't enough manpower, so the guilds had to recruit the denizens as temporary workers.

There were also various legal issues that had to be dealt with. I wasn't familiar with the laws here, but if the laws vary by region, then it was not strange for things to come to a crawl.

*'I think I have a rough idea as to why the workplace is like this.'*

Even if they had a meeting with the guilds and the companies, it would not be enough. They also had meetings with the senators and talked about various things, so they had not been able to set up a proper camp.

*'People don't know the trick to get things done.'*

If one had an opportunity before them, one had to quickly grab that opportunity, even if it meant changing the laws and procedures. If one were to talk about needing to do this and that, this was under this jurisdiction, and that was under that jurisdiction, one would never get anything done.

I was wondering why the team here was so tiny.

*'Damn, I'm sure the guilds here are really frustrated.'*

I finally understood why the bearded bandit had been going around without an adjutant.

I was sure the administrative staffers of his guild were running around busily.

*'Five days is not enough, so they must have decided to prioritize some places.'*

In the end, I had to say something.

"I'm sorry, everyone. This task is the reward I had decided to give to the guild members and mercenaries of the Federation for participating in the

expedition. I think it's going to be difficult… to assign this task to the central government."

"I see. *Haha*. Anyway, thanks to you, the denizens are energetic once again. The economies of the cities are thriving along with companies related to expeditions. *Hahaha.* There are so many changes that I think the old Federation has disappeared," said one of the senators.

'I'm glad you feel that way. You need to use your powers a little more in the future—"

"*Hahaha*, of course we will. We're already thinking about transforming the dungeon into a religious sanctuary," he interrupted me.

*'Then do something.'*

"…"

"How about we move somewhere else?" he suggested.

*'These mosquitoes. I really want to get rid of them all at once.'*

They were the reasons my pure intentions were being distorted.

I just wanted to spend some time with the workers, but I probably looked like a manager who had come here to nag the workers, and it was all because they showed up here.

To make things worse, the senators had come here with their own adjutants and were talking to them.

"There should be a more systematic way of visiting the dungeon. How many warp gates have been installed so far?"

"It's reassuring to see the denizens helping with the task, Master Gregory. Do you have a moment to talk?"

“Come to think of it; I still haven't heard about the companies that are going to provide us with the materials that we need for this task. Which company did you sign a contract with?”

I wasn’t sure whether they wanted to take some of the credit or just nag at them.

Obviously, they hadn't come here just to chat leisurely about the task.

They had mentioned that this project was boosting the Federation’s economy, so I could assume that the guilds who participated in the expedition were in charge here. I was not sure about the denizens, but I was sure they wouldn't earn that much.

*‘Still, I’m sure you guys will profit a lot.’*

The city would become lively. Once this was over, people would go on more expeditions. If one were to look at the overall picture, the development of the Federation would help those who were living off of the Federation's profits.

*‘To be honest, it’s not like your pay is going to increase, so I’m sure there’s something else you want here.’*

They definitely hadn't come here just to show their faces.

For some reason, the senators started talking cautiously.

“*Ahem…*”

“…”

“*Ahem…*”

“…”

“To be honest… I’m sure many denizens are grateful for what you and the Continental Protection Management Committee have done for us.

"The Federation was excluded in many of the events that happened on the continent, so the denizens definitely felt left out so far," a senator said.

All I did was smile.

"I'm sure they feel comforted/… you're taking care of them, after all. We feel the same as them," he added.

*'This is a nice buildup.'*

"To expand off that, there's something I'd like to say. We have a few… business ideas that you might be interested in for the sake of the denizens.

"We're trying to run a charity organization in the Federation… and we're planning on hosting a party for the underprivileged. *Ahem*, the party will be held in two weeks… and we thought you might be interested in it," he explained.

*'Charity party, my ass.'*

"When you say a charity party…"

*'Why are you guys hosting a party when you aren't even a part of the underprivileged? They're the ones who are struggling out there… '*

"We've planned many things… such as holding an auction and a fundraiser. If you attend, I'm sure the denizens will be touched," he answered.

"That's…"

"*Ah,* and I'd like to talk to you about the business ideas I just mentioned…" he added.

They were so evil that simply calling them "evil" wasn't enough.

Hadn't we gotten rid of all the jerks in the Federation? I thought we had gotten rid of all the jerks trying to taint my innocence. Had they not left a will

to their successor before heading to the afterlife?

*'Is there really a law of constant jerks? When you get rid of one jerk, another jerk must appear to fill that spot?'*

It was absurd, but they had decided to take advantage of this opportunity to hear some answers from me. It seemed like I was giving too much, but they had to have heard a rumor that I was going to start a restoration project here.

I got the feeling that they wanted to advertise their companies to me while keeping an eye on the restoration project. That was all I could extrapolate from what was happening right now.

The dungeon cleanup project, the support fund for the small to mid-sized clans, and Squiat's adventurer support fund—they thought that I was being extremely generous by creating these programs, and they assumed that it was their time to shine.

They were trying to make me invest more, as I was already investing in them anyway.

"And about the Blue Guild's potion businesses…"

"Father Lee Ki-Young, what do you think about this?"

"I have an idea about how we can improve the Federation's condition…"

"I'm sure this idea will surprise you. May I ask whether there's an idea that caught your interest among the ones that we just presented to you?"

"…" "Father Lee Ki-Young!"

"Father Lee Ki-Young… this one as well."

"Father Lee Ki-Young!"

"*Hahahaha*. Father Lee Ki-Young, what do you think about this?"

"Father Lee Ki-Young! This is really great! *Haha!*"

I forced myself to smile.

"…"

I started supporting the Federation out of the goodness of my heart, but these mosquitoes were making me look bad.

The saint of the continent was struggling due to these mosquitoes.

I looked pitiful, as I could not do anything other than smile amidst the vortex of unwanted attention.

I was clearly smiling, but my eyes were filled with disappointment and disgust.

I was so disappointed and disgusted with them that I was in pain.

The honorary cardinal had the heartbreaking fate of being required to love everything and everyone on the continent, so the feeling of disappointment was not a familiar feeling for me at all.

*'It's really hard.'*

I was getting tired.

*'It's really… really painful.'*

*'This isn't what I wanted… '*

*'It's really difficult.'*

My vision was getting blurry, and the people around me suddenly looked like monsters filled with desires. Despite the fact that I was starting to feel out of breath, I continued smiling.

Yes, I continued smiling even though I was struggling beneath the desires and greed of these people.

*‘I don’t know what to do. Someone… anyone… help me… ’*

*'Someone… someone… '*

And that wa when Squiat, who had been quietly looking for an opportunity, turned toward the senators and said. “Everyone, please—”

However, Squiat could not finish his sentence, as the bearded bandit had appeared in front of me, beating Squiat to the chase.

The bearded bandit looked like a giant mountain.

He looked so reliable in my eyes.

“Father Lee Ki-Young looks tired,” Gregory said.

“M-Mr. Gregory, I…”

“Father Lee Ki-Young looks tired,” Gregory repeated.

“*Haha*… Master Gregory, what are you—”

“Father. Lee Ki-Young. Looks. Tired,” Gregory repeated again.

The Saint of Light couldn’t do anything other than grab the sleeve of my savior, the bearded bandit.

“I’m sorry, but you should stop here. This is unscheduled, and we have important work to do here. Father Lee Ki-Young and I also have things that we need to discuss privately, so I’d appreciate it if all of you would leave for today,” Gregory explained.

“Master Gregory, you’re being rude,” a senator said.

“We’re having a discussion with Father Lee Ki-Young right now! What do you

think you're doing?!" another senator yelled.

And that was when Gregory said in a deep voice, "I said. There's something. I need to discuss. With him."

Gregory's voice sounded so deadly that I was worried about the possibility that he was being hostile toward them. I grabbed Gregory's sleeve tightly while hiding behind him.

I glanced at Squiat and saw that his bloodshot eyes were filled with despair.

He looked as if he had been stabbed in the back.

*'I'm sorry, Squiat. I'm an investor who can't live without a strong and reliable agent.'*

# CHAPTER 1031
# CLEANUP (14)

*‘Damn it. The situation has turned for the worse.’*

I[1] couldn't let it continue like this.

*‘When did it all start?’*

I asked myself that question, but of course, I wasn’t going to get an answer.

I wasn't in a favorable situation at all.

Regardless of the postwar situation, the members of the Supernovas, including myself, were growing stronger under the honorary cardinal’s wings.

Handling the support funds we were receiving daily was already difficult, but we had to keep a strict record of how the funds were being used, which made the administrative work even more difficult. I

As days passed, the group became bigger and bigger.

The investment amount was an amount I'd never get my hands on, even if I were to work my entire life.

I could host a party every night, but I would still not be able to use up all that moment.

As the leader who would lead the continent in the future, my name could be heard everywhere.

*‘Squiat.’*

I was the guild master of a guild located in Ohio, which was basically on the outskirts of the Federation.

Everyone called me "Supernova" when I completed several expeditions on my own in the tutorial dungeon. I succeeded in grabbing the Federation and the Union's attention, but that was where my career ended.

I settled down in Ohio, as it was close to the Federation's central government, but it didn't take long for me to realize that the Federation wasn't at the center of the continent.

Less than a year later, I learned the existence of the Republic, the Sacred Democratic Country, the Union of Others, and the neutral nations.

Compared to them, the Federation was weak.

*'I thought something might change.'*

It was probably just a subconscious thought of mine.

Every day was the same, but I was no longer a loser like in the past.

I had become the protagonist. Squiat was always in the spotlight.

Unlike the others who couldn't adapt to life here and had ended up falling off, I was a powerful figure whom everyone had high expectations for. Otherwise, they wouldn't have given me the moniker "Supernova."

I'd be lying if I said that I wasn't looking forward to my future.

I imagined living the life of a protagonist from a novel, a comic, or an epic story. I'd go on cool adventures with my comrades. I'd have a special job, and I'd take on quests others couldn't even dream of taking.

However, the truth was that I was only a supporting role, not a protagonist.

No, wait, I did not even have a supporting role.

Talented people like me were everywhere, like sand on the beach, and I hadn't been able to achieve anything.

Compared to Lee Ki-Young, the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country, and Kim Hyun-Sung, the Sword of Sunset, I was useless.

Their adventure logs and quests were always full of surprises, and they always had strong, beautiful, and unique comrades around them. Every time something happened, they'd always be at the center of it.

When things got bad, their one comment would decide the fate of one nation or a group.

They were already the protagonists of the continent. It was unfair. I knew it was silly, but that was how I felt. They had arrived here before me, so it was unfair that our roles were decided that way.

I hadn't really experienced anything.

I hadn't gone through the Republican War, the 27th Legion Summoning Incident, and the Outer Gods War. I went through nothing. I couldn't have the opportunity to make myself known or become even stronger.

Adventurers summoned in the Federation weren’t given many opportunities to climb the ranks, and I believed that it was…

*‘Unfair… I believe it's unfair’*

When I witnessed Lee Ki-Young transforming into the Monarch of Lust and Eternal Sleep, my gut feeling told me that it was my chance—it was my chance to become the protagonist once again and get rid of all the inequalities.

My gambling paid off, and the honorary cardinal agreed with me.

Everything was going well.

It *was* going well.

*'Damn it… '*

"Mr. Squiat," my assistant said.

"Yes, about today's schedule?"

"I'm sorry, but Father Lee Ki-Young said that something came up. He asked that you meet with him next time," my assistant told me.

"*Whoo…"*

"…"

"…"

"Do you happen to know where Father Lee Ki-Young is headed?" I asked.

"We believe he's with Mr. Gregory…" my assistant replied.

*Bang!*

"Damn it!"

"…" "Damn it! Gregory again? Again?! What in the world is there to see in that basement? Damn it! Does he not know what's more important? He knows, so why?!" I paused.

"C-Can I inform him that you're… on the way?" my assistant asked me.

"…"

"…"

"No, it's fine. It's okay," I answered.

If I were to head there, he'd probably treat me like a fool.

*'Why is he so obsessed with the dungeon cleanup? Is it because of the Federation Restoration Project? Does he think that project can change the Federation?'*

"Ridiculous," I mumbled.

In the end, we were nothing but a cleanup crew for the Sacred Democratic Country.

*'It's no different from telling us to live off of the scraps of the Sacred Democratic Country.'*

Even if he somehow managed to resolve the poverty issue here, it would be just treating the symptoms rather than resolving the issue at its roots.

The continent always had its own way of developing things, but nothing would change if I were to just stand idly by.

It'd be meaningful if I took charge and did something myself.

I had to grow the group and become stronger.

I had to become strong enough so that no one would look down on me. I had to accomplish feats that would make the continent acknowledge me. I needed to build a story of myself, just like the honorary cardinal, the Sunset Swordsman, the archmage, and the Mercenary Queen.

"This isn't the time for a cleanup."

This was the time to purchase dungeons and keep on going on expeditions. I had to stabilize our group and become strong enough to beat that pig in the Blue Guild.

"The honorary cardinal has just left the dungeon, and he is now heading in the direction of the Republic. They say he's scheduled to have a lunch meeting with Commander Jin Cheong…" my assistant informed me.

“And Gregory?” I asked.

“Mr. Gregory is not with him,” my assistant replied.

*‘I can’t believe I’ve gotten to the point where I'll relieved by news like this. I can’t believe that news about Gregory not being with him puts me at ease… ’*

“*Wheew.* I think it’s best if we head to the sanctuary,” I suggested.

“What? T-Then… what are you going to do… with the scheduled expedition?” asked my assistant.

“I think it’s better to take care of the Mole Saint’s Sanctuary first, as Father Lee Ki-Young’s attention is on that. We have to show him that we’re interested in the Federation Restoration Project as well,” I replied.

“Understood.”

“Although I don’t think we’ll get anything out of it…” I mumbled.

*'Are there any remaining items in there? I don’t think there are any items left.’*

“I’ll be leaving soon, so please let Gregory know,” I ordered.

“Yes, sir.”

*‘Damn it.’*

I disliked this, but I had to play along for now.

*‘He’s really playing his part as a saint. Damn it.’* I was sure Father Lee Ki-Young was aware as well, so…

*‘I really can’t understand him.’*

He definitely knew that a singular project would not address the root of the issue, and it would not resolve the issues around me.

The scheduled expedition was canceled, so everyone in my group was going to participate in the cleanup. I wasn't sure if this was going to help, but Father Lee Ki-Young would probably be happy to learn that so many people had decided to join the cleanup.

"That's what I think as well. Playing along with the honorary cardinal the a priority for now."

"Right. Let's do as he says for now. We need to keep Gregory in check."

"I don't know what that incompetent fool has in mind though…"

I wasn't exactly feeling comforted, but my comrades seemed to agree with my idea.

The warp gate whisked us into the dungeon, but we were greeted by explosions rather than voices.

*'What's going on?'*

"Reinforcements! We need reinforcements!"

"Take the non-combatants outside the barrier! Head outside the barrier! All combatants…"

*'Is there a monster here?'*

I reached that conclusion, as it was common to find monsters in a dungeon that had yet to receive a thorough cleaning. I looked at my comrades and nodded. Then, they moved at once.

"Where are they?" I asked.

"They're inside the barrier! Mr. Gregory is fighting there!"

"Got it," I said.

“Looks like we got here at the perfect time. We’ll head inside.”

“O-Okay!”

“If you have people you can spare, please tell them to rescue the wounded.”

As if layers of protection spells weren't enough, they even put up a barrier.

Perhaps it was because of the protection spells and the barrier, but the surroundings remained clean. I also couldn't see any injured workers.

I couldn’t deny the fact that Gregory was doing a good job at managing the dungeon.

If it weren't for their system, there was no way they'd be able to react so quickly.

*‘Please… ’*

I thought about wanting to get some of the credit.

The worst-case scenario was people finding out that I hadn't done anything and Gregory receiving all the credit. If that ended up happening, we could lose our support funds.

“I’m going in,” I said.

“Understood.”

The accident occurred on Level -4. Upon arriving at the scene, I saw Gregory and his party members covered in blood. There were dozens of monsters on the ground, but what caught my attention was…

*‘What is that?’*

“*Hahaha*… Mr. Squiat! So you came here to help us? I believe… the Federation has achieved something great. I, Gregory, have finally gotten the opportunity

to repay the honorary cardinal's kindness!" Gregory exclaimed.

*'What… is that spear… '*

I saw what looked like a holy spear stuck on the wall.

I had definitely seen that somewhere. Yes, it resembled Benigoa's spear depicted in her statues…

"Father Lee Ki-Young will be happy about this," Gregory said.

"…"

"We'll need to investigate it thoroughly, but that spear is probably the spear that Goddess Benigoa was using when she was still alive…" Gregory added.

I had no idea how it happened, but the spear was in my hand, and it flew toward Gregory's chest. A grotesque noise echoed as the spear made a hole in his flesh, and it was followed by a dull thud as Gregory collapsed before me.

"W-Why—*Cough! Cough!*"

"This is for the Federation's sake… Gregory," I replied.

---

1. Squiat's POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1032
# CLEANUP (15)

“Y-You ungrateful… *cough…”* Gregory coughed.

“…”

“Do you know how much… Father Lee Ki-Young—*cough…”* Gregory mumbled.

I felt like my mind had gone blank, but my body was moving on its own. As soon as Gregory collapsed, one of his guild members charged at me with his sword.

“*AAAAAAH!* You piece of shit!”

While I[1] was staring at Gregory, an arrow flew from somewhere and struck his temple. Gregory's scream was cut off, and he fell to the ground.

I heard people taking out their weapons and casting spells.

It was obvious what was going to happen.

A fight was about to break out between Gregory’s party and my allies.

“*AAAAH!*”

“Kill them all! Hurry! Hurry! Kill them! Shit… hurry up and get rid of them!”

“You jerks! How could you!”

“Mr. Gregory! Mr. Gregory! *Ahhh!*”

“Call for a priest! Request for help from the surface!”

“Get rid of the signalman first! Hurry and cast Dispel!”

“*AAAAH!*”

*‘Damn it, I wasn’t planning on taking it this far. However, I really have no choice. This is all for the Federation.’*

I had to do this to change the Federation.

*‘We can’t keep living as the Democratic Country’s pets.’*

My headache was throbbing in pain as I justified my actions by saying that this was all for the sake of the bigger picture.

Some people would call me a criminal, but this was the only way.

I had no issues with Gregory obtaining power. I wouldn't have made this decision if he hadn't told me that he was going to hand over that Mythic spear to Father Lee Ki-Young.

If Gregory had been more *open-minded*, I wouldn't have killed him. There would be no reason to do that, after all.

The spear was a relic of the Democratic Country, and Benigoa was using it a long time ago. It was a historical item. The spear was capable of changing the continent, the world, and even history itself. If it were an ordinary spear, I'd be satisfied with just finding it like Gregory, but this spear wasn't just an ordinary spear.

It was a treasure that would never appear again.

There was nothing more idiotic than presenting this to the Democratic Country when this could help the Federation get back on its feet. The spear was priceless, so I simply sacrificed something small for the greater good.

*‘What a foolish man.’*

Gregory was a man who could only see what was right in front of him.

Incompetent idiots like him were the reason the Federation became what it was today; he had reduced the value of the Federation by transforming himself into a dog. Despite that, he hadn't been able to contribute anything to the continent.

If he were a bit smarter, the Federation wouldn't be in this sad state.

He was obsessed with the small achievements rather than looking at the bigger picture.

If he had known better, he wouldn't have been on the ground right now.

This wasn't a crime. I had simply gotten rid of a traitor—a dog of the Democratic Country.

I nodded and walked away as if I were being possessed.

"*Ahhh!*"

"*Cough!*"

"Help…"

"You… traitors! You criminals…"

I walked amidst those insults.

The scales of the battle had already tipped to us, so there was no need for me to join the fight. Our opponents were exhausted after fighting the monster, and they weren't prepared for our ambush.

The ambush happened in an instant, and the battle was already ending before they could even react.

I could hear and feel strange and unpleasant *splashing* sounds, but for some

reason, the blood-soaked ground felt sacred to me. I strangely felt uplifted when I saw the spear beckoning at me.

I stretched out my hand and felt it instantly.

“This is it,” I said.

So this was what it felt like.

I could feel explosive power coursing through me.

“*Haha*… this is it!”

I could finally see what the world looked like in their eyes.

If one wanted to stand above the continent, one had to be at least this strong.

It felt like I had become a transcendent being.

There was a wall between humans and transcendent beings, but the spear in my hand helped me overcome that wall.

Right now, I was above everyone else.

I was a protagonist, and I was on a whole new level compared to the people here.

My encounter with this relic was like a scene from a novel. It meant I still had things I needed to do on this continent, and it proved that I didn’t have just a supporting role.

I swung the spear. All I did was swing it once, but the space before me was torn apart.

I looked back with a smile, and I saw my comrades looking at me while covered in blood.

“Squiat…”

"…"

"What… do we do now?" they asked.

"Don't let this affect you. We did the right thing," I reassured them.

"…"

"It was the right thing to do. I feel bad for their tragic ending, but we had no choice. Think carefully about our goal, Raynan of Extinction.

"Our goal is to protect the peace of the continent and return the corrupted continent to its original state. We won't be able to change anything without power, and *we've* just obtained that power," I explained.

"Looks like you're not planning on delivering that weapon to the honorary cardinal. Is there even a way to hide it?" they asked.

"Of course. What's done is done. Thankfully, the surface has yet to hear of this news, and it's probably because of that barrier. That idiot, Gregory… he dug his own grave. *Wheeew*," I said.

"So what's our next plan, Squiat?" they asked.

"I just want all of you to remember this. What happened here was an accident. Before we arrived here, Gregory and his party were already fighting the monster. We joined the fight, but we couldn't save them. I think it's best if we say that," I told them.

"I don't feel comfortable about this," one of them commented.

"But it's necessary. It'll be the end of us if we leave like this, so please check if there are Goddess' Mirrors nearby. Raynan of Extinction, go to the entrance and prohibit entry to anyone. Robinwood of Frenzy, I want you to clean up this place so the rangers won't be able to find anything," I ordered.

"Got it."

“Understood.”

He was reliable. He could easily ruin the traces so that the rangers would have no idea what had happened. He could make it look like Gregory and his guild members were annihilated by the monster.

*‘It’s a race against time.’*

And that was when I saw someone moving…

“*Whoo… whoo…* You… dirty bastards…”

“…”

“Y-You ungrateful fools! You dirty hypocrites!”

Gregory got up slowly with a hole in his chest. Obviously, he was badly wounded. He was so wounded that he was actually dying. His breathing was ragged, and he seemed like he was at his limits just by standing in front of us.

“How could you… betray… Father Lee Ki-Young—*cough…* How?!” Gregory questioned.

“It would have been great if you hadn't stood up, Gregory,” I said.

“How could you…” Gregory repeated.

“…”

“…” “Stand back, everyone. I’ll be with him in his final moments. He was a corrupted fool who turned the Federation into what it is today, but he’s also a great man who has contributed a lot to the Federation, so killing him with this spear is the least I can do for him,” I said.

“How dare you!” Gregory shouted.

*‘You’ve become weak, Gregory.’*

No, I had simply become stronger.

I was overflowing with so much power that I couldn’t contain it.

The giant in front of me was once a powerful man who dominated the Federation, but he looked like a child in my eyes right now.

Seeing him charge at me like a fool with his wounds reminded me of a herbivore charging into the mouth of a tiger.

I didn't even need to use my powers, as I was a transcendent being, while he was just a dying human being. There was a *boom* as my spear and his gauntlet collided.

I saw his gauntlet crumble to pieces.

“All I can say is that I’m sorry,” I said.

“You… asshole… Father Lee Ki-Young—he… *cough*…”

“Father Lee Ki-Young this, Father Lee Ki-Young that. Is that all you can talk about? You saw it as well, didn’t you? That… monster,” I asked.

“I didn’t… see anything. That wasn’t… *cough*… Father Lee Ki-Young. Do you know how much he… this place… us…” Gregory mumbled.

“It’s people like you who ruined the Federation, Gregory. Have you ever considered the fact that those who were too busy following him around are the ones who have put the continent in this state? Everyone is turning a blind eye to it. They know, but they’re feigning ignorance. Does this look like a normal situation to you?” I asked.

“That’s because… the continent… needs him. You… fool…” Gregory said.

“What did you say?” I questioned.

“The reason… everyone… decided to forget what they saw on that day, and

why… they didn't bother talking about it… is that… they believe in him.

"The continent… still needs him, and we believe that… he'll lead us to a bright future. The reason the heavens… sent Father Lee Ki-Young back to us. The reason he came back… to the continent…"

"You've clearly been brainwashed," I told him.

"Squiat…"

"…"

"…"

"There aren't… that many people… *cough*… who are willing to… sacrifice themselves… for others. For the underprivileged people… Father Lee Ki-Young…" Gregory paused.

"…"

"He's… the continent's…"

"You're crazy, Gregory. You're crazier than I thought," I said.

He was dying, but something about his gaze put me in a really bad mood.

"The continent… still needs… him… He's the one… who will lead… us… on the right path…" Gregory continued.

"…" "*Cough… cough…* We must repay… for his kindness… We must offer the spear… to repay the kindness we received…" Gregory said.

"…"

"We owe him a debt of gratitude…" Gregory added.

"Idiot," I said.

"*Ah… ahhhhhhhhh!*"

The dying fool suddenly took a step forward.

A deafening *boom* echoed, and I was pushed back a little, but it didn't affect the situation.

I turned to the side and attacked him with the spear.

Gregory was blasted into the wall where we found the spear.

*Rumble!*

The wall broke, and Gregory disappeared inside the wall.

"Damn it."

"…"

"Damn it!"

I looked behind the collapsed wall and saw what looked like an abyss.

Gregory had fallen into the pitch-black abyss.

* * *

*Clang.*

"Are you okay, Father Lee Ki-Young?" Commander Jin asked.

"…"

"I'll… get the glass cleaned up for you," he added.

"…"

"Is something troubling you?" he asked.

“It’s nothing. I just… felt… uneasy… for some reason. It’s nothing, Commander Jin. I’m sorry for worrying you guys. I… made a mistake,” I[2] said.

---

1. Squiat's Point of View ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1033
# CLEANUP (16)

“So…”

“So what?” I asked.

“I’m talking about the mistake you made earlier. What was your intention behind that?” Commander Jin asked.

“Intention? It’s natural for a person to break one or two cups in their life. My hand just slipped. Is there a law that says I can’t make mistakes at the table?” I questioned.

“There isn’t one, but… this is *you* we’re talking about. It's just strange—”

“What?” I asked.

“Since you said it’s nothing… I’ll… let it go for now,” Commander Jin said.

“…”

“…”

“It’s like you’re trying to embarrass me or something. Was that cup expensive? Or were you annoyed because the higher-ups of the Republic were there?

"Does a guest breaking a cup at your dining table affect your reputation? Don’t worry. We’re past that now. Why are you still making a big deal out of a small incident that happened during a gathering that has already passed?” I questioned.

“That’s not what I’m talking about, you fool,” Commander Jin said.

"…"

"Anyway, I'm glad it's nothing. Don't worry about what I just said. Looks like I got worried for no reason," Commander Jin said.

"You always do as you please. You questioned my intentions, and now, you're telling me not to worry about it," I complained.

"…"

"…"

"*Ahem… ahem…* anyway, the Republic has become a great place to live," I commented.

"What?"

"I said the Republic has become a great place to live. There were a few strange people here before you left, Commander. However, I no longer have to worry about this place anymore, as you've decided to settle down here. I feel at ease, so I'm happy.

"I'm saying that it feels like things are going well. I don't see anyone I need to get rid of and there are laws and regulations in place, so it looks like we *did* need someone to stand in the middle of all this.

"It's great to see you keep things under control without me telling you what to do," I explained.

"Actually, the public opinion within the Republic isn't that great," Commander Jin informed.

*'I expected that.'*

There was that strange guy from last time. The young man with the Supernova gang.

“There are many people questioning whether the investment that the Republic and the Democratic Country are making is a waste of money. There are people openly questioning our policies,” Commander Jin continued.

“It’s understandable,” I commented.

“I don’t know about the Union of Others, but the Federation had stopped operating as a nation for a while now. If you exclude some of the major and small cities, they can be called a lawless nation. That's how bad things have become in the Federation.

"Since the continental law was implemented to regulate the black markets throughout the continent, they say that even trades done behind the scenes have stopped completely.

"There’s a reason why the mercenary business has become so popular in the Federation. There's no saving their rotten lands, so they can’t even farm. The corrupt officials are busy worrying about their own interests. This is their reality,” Commander Jin explained.

“…”

“No one cares about the restoration of the Federation. I’m sure that place already has its own laws,” Commander Jin added.

“…”

“Of course, this will be a huge opportunity, but I don’t really agree with it. You can’t pour new wine into old bottles,” Commander Jin said.

“I thought the Republic has decided not to get involved? You said you can’t pour new wine into old bottles, but your actions are different from your words.” I pointed out.

“The Republic is different from the Federation. I’m simply leaving them alone. They’re just dogs whose cries I can’t even hear, so there’s no point in lending them a hand.

"However, it's a good thing because I can use them to keep the central government in check," Commander Jin said.

*'That's one way to think about it.'*

I knew what they were thinking. The Republic cared more about such issues.

The Hero of Shadows had the Republic under his control, and he wasn't naive enough to be swayed by a few rookies who had recently gotten into politics.

If he could control them, leaving them alone would be beneficial for him.

If he were to get rid of them, they'd only raise their guard, so it was like he was trying to train those rookies enough so that they'd eventually duke it out with the central government.

*'If something happens, he can use them as well.'*

It could be said that the Federation's situation was drastically different from the Sacred Democratic Country that had united as one under a sacred democracy.

*'It's been a while since we got into a political war.'*

I couldn't help but think that this crazy fool had purposely refrained from getting involved in any conflicts within the Republic. It'd be entertaining, after all.

He talked about controlling them and using them to keep the central government in check, but I had a feeling that he simply let those fools loose for his own entertainment.

He was either an extreme control freak who'd feel bothered without control of all conflict, or he was a crazy man who thought of politics as a type of game.

Regardless, I was relieved that the Republic was running properly. Jin Cheong wasn't any different from the other corrupted figures who only cared about their own interests, but at least he wasn't playing around with money and power.

"*Hm…*"

They said they were putting effort into their internal structure, but the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic were the only ones functioning properly.

The Continental Protection Management Committee and I had been helping the Union of Others and the Federation, so I hoped things would work out on their own, but there were a few people who had decided to ruin our efforts.

Unless we address the issue at its roots or place decent people in there, I had a feeling that nothing was actually going to change.

"He's a pretty good guy," I mumbled.

"?"

"I'm talking about Gregory. Don't you think it's a good idea to give him a government position?" I asked.

"*Ahh*… him. I don't think it's a bad idea… but being competent and diligent are two different things. If there's a competent staffer working under him, he'll be pretty useful, but if that's not the case—"

"No, Commander Jin. In troubling times like this, you don't need skills at all. Having someone extremely diligent is the best. Do you know why the Republicans have suddenly come back to their senses?

"It probably sounds like a joke to you, but it's because a symbol called the Hero of Shadows exists. The Federation is not going to be any different from the Republic. Humans are simple-minded, so raising them up is pretty important," I explained.

“Excuse me, Father Lee Ki-Young. The Blue Guild is asking for your presence,” a staff member informed me.

“*Ah*, I’ll contact them,” I said.

*‘I have no idea why they're contacting me.’*

I opened my hand mirror and saw a steady stream of messages.

*‘Damn it.’*

I frowned as I opened Team Leader Park Joong-Ki’s direct message. I had no reason to contact him, and I also received messages from the others, but his direct message was at the very top.

*"Mr. Park Joong-Ki?"*

— Excuse me, sir.

*"It’s been a while. Did something happen… Did Hyun-Sung…”*

— A problem has occurred at the Mole Saint’s Cozy Sanctuary. I received news that a monster appeared, while they were doing demolition work. The workers were evacuated, and the combatants were immediately dispatched, but Mr. Gregory went missing, and eleven people died.

—…

*‘What is he talking about?’*

*"What’s the exact location?"*

— C45, sir. They haven’t found Mr. Gregory’s corpse, but they believe that he died. The eleven people who died were in really bad shape. The rangers had a hard time identifying them. The Black Swan Guild’s investigation group has been deployed to investigate the matter.

*'Gregory, you fool.'*

*"And the spear?"*

— *Huh?* The spear? I'm sorry, I…

*"Actually, it's fine, Mr. Park Joong-Ki. Ah, it sounds like there were other people there besides Gregory's party."*

— There's actually something I want to tell you about that. The Blue Guild…

*"The Blue Guild thinks that those jerks… are the culprit, right?"*

— Yes, but… they haven't found any proof yet.

*'How ridiculous. No matter what I think about it, It's really ridiculous.'*

It looked like things could get even worse. The situation was so bad that I couldn't control my expression.

Squiat taking Benigoa's spear was part of my plan, but I had no idea that something would happen to Gregory. I thought it'd take a while for them to start working on area C45, and I wanted to work on Squiat a bit more before all this.

The diligent Gregory had been working night and day without taking any breaks, so they had to have reached C45 faster than I thought.

Squiat's jealousy drove him mad upon seeing the spear, and he probably stabbed Gregory in the back.

*'He got killed by a monster? Yeah, right.'*

Gregory's party was strong enough to take care of the monsters there.

The fact that the main members were so badly injured to the point that they couldn't be recognized was funny to me. It was even more ridiculous than

saying that Kim Hyun-Sung had allowed Park Deok-Gu to make a move against those jerks.

— Sir?

*"…"*

— What should we…

*"Lock up those fools."*

— Pardon me?

*"I'm talking about Squiat and the Supernovas or whatever who were there with him. Lock those guys up with Park Deok-Gu and Kim Ye-Ri's help— actually, no, take Ha-Yan and Hee-Young instead. Tell them not to kill them. Make sure to tell them that."*

— As I mentioned earlier, we don't have evidence to accuse them of anything, sir. Do you—

*"I told you to lock them up, Mr. Park Joong-Ki. Do we need evidence to do that? You must be losing your touch. You still don't understand what I'm saying here? I'm sure… I told you to lock those guys up. You need proof? Is that important?"*

—

"Just lock them up."

— I understand what you're saying, sir. I'm sorry, I…

*"Whoo… it's fine. I'm sorry. I just got a bit angrier than usual."*

— It's okay.

*"I'll give you time off, so you should take a break. You're not being demoted… I just think it's best if I handle this one…"*

— I will take care of it according to your instructions.

*"I’m sorry for taking my anger out on you."*

— It’s fine, sir.

The fact that Jin Cheong was laughing at me made me feel even angrier.

“Looks like things aren’t going well for you,” Jin Cheong commented, taking a sip of his tea.

I felt like throwing my cup of tea at his face.

*‘Yeah, it’s not going well, damn it. Actually, it’s more like it’s ruined now.’*

I felt like I had been too nice.

While I was gnashing my teeth, my hand mirror vibrated.

*‘He’s so shameless.’*

— Father Lee Ki-Young…

*"…”*

— I’m sorry for contacting you late, as I haven't had any time to contact you until now, Father. I’m not sure if you've already heard, but a huge accident happened at the sanctuary. A monster we believe to be at least Legendary appeared and…

"…”

— We tried to get in as soon as possible, but we couldn't save Mr. Gregory and his party members…

"Hey."

— Yes?

"…"

— Is this… Father Lee Ki-Young?

"Yeah, it's me, you crazy bastard."

— E-Excuse me?

"Squiat, Squiat… our poor Squiat. You don't like me, right? I look like… some weakling in your eyes, right?"

— W-What? I… can't really… hear you…

*"Do I look like an idiot… because I've been smiling and doing everything you asked me to do, huh?"*

*"You demonic bastard,"* I added.

# CHAPTER 1034
# CLEANUP (17)

*"I-I*[1] *really don't understand… Are you really Father Lee Ki-Young?"*

— Who else would I be?

*"…"*

— You must be thinking that you're the king of the world because I did everything you asked of me. Are you having fun going around and showing off that petty ability of yours? You must feel like you've obtained everything.

— Unfortunately, you crossed the line, Squiat.

*"…"*

— Aren't you supposed to be cautious? Why are you not cautious at all?

*"Excuse me…?"*

— Why are you not being cautious? If you were careful like you usually were, this wouldn't happen. Right? Am I right?

*"…"*

— I'm not acting like this because I want to do it. I just wanted to stay a saint, but you haven't realized that at all. I really didn't want to do this. I want to remain as an insignificant honorary cardinal for the denizens and the adventurers. I just wanted to be everyone's lovable honorary cardinal. Why can't you understand that?

*"…"*

*‘What the… ’*

— I’m leaving right now.

*‘What the hell happened?’*

— I’m leaving right now to crush that head of yours, so wait for me.

*‘This is… really the honorary cardinal?’*

— Do you have anything to say? I won’t be listening, but if there’s something you want to say, then say it. I might lessen your punishment depending on your excuse.

The turn of events was so sudden that I blanked out. The voice echoing in my ears belonged to the honorary cardinal I was familiar with.

As usual, his voice was as gentle and as noble as always, which was befitting of a saint, but he was spouting swear words that I couldn't have imagined I'd hear from his mouth one day.

I couldn’t even understand what he was trying to say, as he was swearing nonstop as if he were some back alley thug.

I questioned whether he was in his right mind or not, as his behavior was erratic—he'd laugh, provoke me, and curse.

No one would be able to think properly in a situation like this.

I immediately assumed that someone was impersonating the honorary cardinal or someone was playing a joke on me.

I was sure there was nothing wrong with the communication channel with Father Lee Ki-Young, but one ought to avoid speaking in absolutes. Someone could have accessed this communication channel, or perhaps there was a technical error.

*‘What in the world… ’*

*"I’m Squiat of the Federation. I don’t know who you are, but—"*

— I’m Mosquito of the Federation, *blah, blah, blah.* I don’t know who you are, *blah, blah, blah…*

*‘Crazy bastard. Who… in the world… ’*

*"I don’t know what you’re doing."*

— I dun know what you’re dooooing…

*‘How dare this childish jerk… ’*

*"You’re impersonating the honorary cardinal right now. The Continental Protection Management Committee—"*

— I’m the honorary cardinal. How dare you say that someone is impersonating me? You’re pretty stupid, aren’t you? You still don’t understand what’s going on? You think you connected to the wrong communication channel? Really?

*"…"*

— The communication channels on the hand mirror don't get technical errors, Squiat. There’s nothing wrong with the system.

*"…"*

— It looks like you don’t believe me, so I’ll kindly explain what’s going to happen to you.

It didn’t take long for me to realize that this wasn’t a joke.

And it was because I heard *knocking* on the door.

“Mr. Squiat.”

"…"

"Mr. Squiat. My name is Alex, and I'm a member of the Continental Protection Management Committee's Inspection Team from Lindel. May I come in?" Alex asked.

"…"

"Mr. Squiat, I'll say it again. My name is Alex, and I'm a member of the Continental Protection Management Committee's Inspection Team from Lindel. Are you available to talk? I would like to ask you a few questions regarding the disappearance and the death of Mr. Gregory…" Alex repeated.

— Do you believe me now?

*'What the hell is going on?'*

I could hear many voices outside, so I assumed that I had already been surrounded.

"What are we going to ask him?! Move aside, Alex! You crazy murderer! How could you! How could you betray Father Lee Ki-Young's kindness?!" Kennen shouted.

"Calm down, Kennen! We're still investigating it! You know that you shouldn't act like this. Hey! George, say something!" Alex yelled.

"Well, procedures are important," George commented.

"Damn it! I'm an idiot for coming here with you guys. Go away, Kennen! This is my jurisdiction, so leave! Mr. Squiat, I'm Alex from Lindel! Are you inside?" Alex asked.

— Shouldn't you start acknowledging it?

*"W-Who are you?"*

— What do you mean? I’m the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country, the Saint of the Continent, the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild, and the God of Sacrifice and Revival. Need more titles? You still don’t get what’s happening, do you? Hold on. I’ll make sure you understand what’s going on.

Once his words fell, the Goddess’ Mirror installed at the camp came to life.

The news titled “Special Report” was played. It wasn’t all that different from the news that they usually played, but this news contained shocking information. It also had a stupefying title that said, "Gregory Party’s Murder Case."

[Squiat of the Federation is the suspect, and his whereabouts are currently unknown. The Continental Protection Management Committee has decided to impose a lockdown on the capital, including the Mole Saint’s Cozy Sanctuary. An arrest warrant has also been issued for Squiat, and he has been labeled the primary suspect of the crime.]

— Squiat of the Federation is the suspect, and his whereabouts are currently unknown. The Continental Protection Management Committee has decided to impose a lockdown on the capital, including the Mole Saint’s Cozy Sanctuary. An arrest warrant has also been issued for Squiat, and he has been labeled the primary suspect of the crime.

The news anchor said the same exact words Father Lee Ki-Young was saying through the hand mirror.

[Warrants have also been issued for the arrest of the following criminals from the Federation—Raynan of Extinction and Robinwood of Frenzy. They're famous for being a part of a group called "Supernovas of the West."

[The Sacred Democratic Country is working with the authorities of the Federation for the investigation; they’re also working closely with the Continental Protection Management Committee to find out exactly what had happened.

[Some groups have blamed this incident on the honorary cardinal's excessive sympathy for the Federation. Denizens of the Democratic Country, please continue with your daily…]

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— The Sacred Democratic Country is working with the authorities of the Federation for the investigation; they're also working closely with the Continental Protection Management Committee…

It was like the world had changed in an instant.

More stupefying titles appeared on the screen.

[A Report About Squiat of the Federation, a Cold-hearted Murderer - Report Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report]

[A Report About Squiat, the Tyrant of Ohio, a City on the Outskirts of the Federation - Report Kang Yoo-Mi of the Continental Protection Management Committee's Suspension Division]

[What Happened in the Dungeon on That Day? - Kim Sung-Kyeong, Dungeon Columnist]

[The Hope of the Federation? The Supernova of the West, AKA the Evil Organization of the Federation. About the Rotten Apples in the Federation. The Ones Who Must Be Discarded - Correspondent of the Democratic Newspaper Company]

*'Am I… dreaming right now?'*

*'Damn it. This is crazy. Shit. What the… hell… is going on?'*

— Do you believe me now?

*"…"*

— Are you finally convinced?

I had to give in for now. No, it was more like I needed to find out what was going on.

*"Why… are you doing this?"*

— You really don’t know? You know better than anyone why I’m doing this.

*"I don’t understand… what you’re saying, Father Lee Ki-Young."*

— You killed Gregory and stole Benigoa’s relic.

*"No, I… didn’t."*

— Hey, I know you killed him. You’re the one who made all the mess there.

*"I really… don’t know what you’re talking about, Father Lee Ki-Young. There must be… some kind of misunderstanding here."*

—…

"If you’re saying this because of your suspicion of me… I can explain everything. First of all, there's no—"

— There’s no evidence or proof? Hey, I don’t care about that stuff. You think I don’t know that there’s no proof? I know that there isn’t any proof. Honestly, I can find proof if I want to do so, but I’m not going to do that because it's going to take a long time, which is really annoying.

— That’s not what’s important, though. It’s the fact that you lost my trust.

*"T-That doesn't make—"*

— It makes sense to me.

*"How can that…"*

— I'm the law here.

*"…"*

—…

*"Damn it. You think I'll let you have your way?!"*

—…

*"Do you realize the fact that this call is being recorded right now? I knew something was off. An honorary cardinal like you has actually spoken such words? Was it all an act? Was it all an act?"*

— So what?

*"Are you going to be okay if the denizens heard our conversation?"*

— Upload it.

*"…"*

— Do it if you can.

I looked down at the Goddess' Hand Mirror and was about to save the recorded audio, but…

*'…'*

— What's wrong? Can't save it?

*"…"*

— Are you even recording? Looks like there's something wrong with your device. You're sweating so much, Squiat. I want to show you how funny you look right now. I see you looking around and struggling with your hand

mirror in hand.

*'Damn it… is he watching? How is he watching? Is there a surveillance orb somewhere?'*

— Where are you trying to escape to? Where are you going to run to? Even if you escape, do you really think that you can run away?

"Squiat!" someone shouted outside.

“Fuck!” I exclaimed in fear.

Perhaps it was because I was scared, but my body moved before my mind.

The voice outside made me grab the spear.

For now, I had to get out of this place.

The right choice here was to leave and make plans for the future. Regardless of my current situation and the honorary cardinal’s true identity, I had many things to handle first, and the very first thing I had to do before anything else was to get out of here.

*'I need to gather forces.'*

Father Lee Ki-Young was hiding his true self, and it was possible that the members of the Blue Guild and the entire Democratic Country were being fooled by him.

My assumption was right. The behavior he showed in the dungeon was his true self. He had been pretending to be noble and holy, but the being inside of him was a demon that specialized in deceiving humans.

The continent would find out. It wouldn't happen today, but it'd happen someday.

*'Damn it, damn it. I haven’t lost yet!'*

*'Look at Benigoa's spear. I've already become a transcendent being.'*

"Damn it! Go in and suppress him!" someone shouted outside.

I escaped through a different exit and started running away.

— You're probably wondering how I got this far, right, Squiat?

"…"

— You're probably wondering about the difference between the two of us.

"…"

— The crux of the matter isn't who got here first or who got here late.

"…"

— I have never compromised.

"…"

— Whenever things escalate to this point, I will never compromise. And those daring enough to climb up the ranks and challenge me… I sent them all to hell except for a certain someone.

Just as I thought I managed to escape, I saw a mage wearing a large hat. The hat was lowered, obscuring her face, so I couldn't identify her at first glance.

"H-H-Hello."

"H-H-How… are you doing?"

---

1. Squiat's POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1035
# CLEANUP (18)

Every cloud had a silver lining.

*‘Haha… ’*

Just as I thought that I had fallen into a pitch-black abyss with no ray of hope, I saw a way to break through my predicament.

“H-H-H-How… are you doing?”

“*Ha… hahahaha!*”

*‘One mage.’*

She was just one mage. The mage was clad in a white robe with a large staff in hand, and her large hat was covering her face, so I couldn't identify her immediately. However, it didn't take me long to realize her identity.

She was a symbolic being known as the best mage on the continent.

She was a transcendent mage, and she was truly deserving of her titles "Archmage" and "Goddess of Magic." The mages of the continent hadn't been able to measure her strength using this era's standards, and she was also famous for advancing the continent’s magic technology by centuries.

It’d be strange if there were an adventurer unaware of her name. Actually, it wasn’t just the adventurers. I was sure everyone on the continent knew her name—Jung Ha-Yan.

Was she alone? What about Kim Hyun-Sung? Was Jo Hye-Jin not with her?

I couldn't see the other members of the Blue Guild.

I couldn't see the Continental Protection Management Committee's Inspection Team and the assassins of the Black Swan Guild—a guild known as one of Lindel's three major guilds.

The troops of the Red Mercenary Guild weren't around as well, but I instantly reached an answer.

*'Did they not have enough time to prepare?'*

A mage working on her own was unprecedented, especially in situations where a battle was going to take place. That was just the nature of mages. They needed help from the vanguards. No, they *had* to get help from the vanguards

Of course, I knew that Jung Ha-Yan was on a whole new level compared to any mage out there. There weren't any mages on the same level as her, but she definitely had many ways to fight in close combat as well; she was the Goddess of Magic, after all.

If she had already channeled a few spells before appearing before me, then it wasn't strange that she was alone. I assumed they had no choice but to have her make a move first because she could cast Teleport.

*'They have no information.'*

They had no information about me. Actually, it was more like Father Lee Ki-Young and the Continental Protection Management Committee had no information about Benigoa's relic.

*'I've changed.'*

I wouldn't stand a chance against her before I obtained Benigoa's relic, but things were different now.

*'Benigoa's spear.'*

It was an item capable of performing miracles—no, it was a miracle in itself.

This relic contained a power that I couldn’t really control.

*‘There’s no way I'll lose to a mage with a weapon like this.’*

“T-T-They said he’s a bad man,” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“…”

“A-A-As long as I don’t kill him… right, Sora?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

*‘Where the hell is Sora?’*

I couldn't see anyone else.

"*Ah…* Sora isn’t here…” Jung Ha-Yan said, correcting herself.

Ordinary mages could only channel one spell at once, while Legendary mages were capable of channeling two to three spells at once.

Jung Ha-Yan was an archmage, so it was highly likely that she could channel five to seven spells at once. I had to be prepared to deal with at least five spells. If she were to perform quick cast, then she could definitely cast two spells at once for a maximum of nine spells channeled at once.

*‘Actually… ’*

I believed she had to prioritize Teleport and protection-type spells, so I just had to be prepared to block seven spells.

I was about nine hundred meters from her, and it would take me about three seconds to reach her at my maximum speed. We were indoors, so I couldn’t use AoE attacks.

Just as the air was starting to become thick with hostility, I stepped forward and heard her casting a spell.

*Fwoosh!*

A giant fireball manifested in the hallway, and it flew toward me.

The pressure coming from the fireball alone was so immense that I inhaled sharply. The giant fireball that seemed to be made from the flames of Hell itself flew toward me as if it were going to reduce me to ashes in the blink of an eye.

I froze at the terrifying sight, but I tightened my grip around the spear and took a stance.

*'I wonder—'*

But…

*'I can do it.'*

Benigoa's spear granted the wielder a powerful divine Shield.

*'First, I need to break through using this.'*

The giant fireball was most likely a smokescreen that would prevent me from seeing the spell that Jung Ha-Yan would cast after the fireball. I stuck as close as possible to the floor, and the fireball merely grazed me.

It was painful, but I couldn't scream in pain right now.

*'The second spell.'*

A stream of blue mana flew toward me. It looked like a whip, and it wriggled as if it had a mind of its own.

It'd be impossible with ordinary mana, but the holy power contained in Benigoa's spear could definitely cut that down. I took another step forward and swung the spear.

A blinding light was unleashed, and it split the blue whip into two.

*‘The third spell.’*

“I can do it.”

*‘The fourth spell.’*

“*AAAAAH!*”

*'The fifth spell.’*

“Damn it…” I mumbled.

*BOOM!*

“Six!” I shouted.

I couldn’t see the spell. Its presence was so faint that I couldn’t feel it properly, but I was sure that it was headed toward me. I could feel myself sustaining more injuries as the seconds went by, but…

*‘Just a little more.’*

“Just a little moooore!” I yelled.

I swung the spear, drawing a huge circle around me. A radiant light instantly pervaded the surroundings. I could finally see the spell that I hadn't been able to see until now, and I could finally feel it as well.

It was like I had overcome my limits—no, I was in the middle of overcoming my limits. I was clearly overcoming my limits. A scenery I had never seen before appeared before me, and I reckoned that transcendent beings had been looking at this scenery.

Gray Warrior Rafael, the God of Spear Jo Hye-Jin, the Red Goddess of War Cha Hee-Ra, and the God of Sunset Kim Hyun-Sung were probably staring at the same scenery as me.

"*Haha… hahahaha!*"

I couldn't help but laugh. I was dying, but I was recovering at a speed visible to the naked eye. I was overflowing with energy as well. A power capable of splitting even mountains burst out of my heart and spread throughout me.

I realized just then that I was indeed the protagonist of this world.

I was also worthy of climbing the ranks.

I just wasn't ready until this opportunity was given to me.

At this moment, I qualified just like others with the same interest as me…

At this moment, I obtained power…

— He's really making a fool of himself.

"Seven!" I shouted.

I grabbed the spear tightly with both hands and swung it at the oncoming spell.

"*AAAAAHH!*" I shouted unknowingly.

The archmage frowned.

*'One more step.'*

Just as I expected, she had to have used up all of her spells, as I saw her channeling her spells once again.

The moment I stepped forward and thrust my spear toward her…

*Clench! Clench! Clench!*

I heard the chattering of someone's teeth, and a wave of pitch-black mana burst out of the archmage.

*‘Did she have… one more spell left?’*

*Clench! Clench! Clench!*

*'No, that can’t… be.'*

“That can’t… That can’t be…” I mumbled.

The pitch-black mana engulfed everything around me. When I looked up, I saw a clump of dark red mana transforming into what looked like a spider's leg. I looked around and realized that I was inside a really dark space.

And that was when I heard faint voices…

“*AAAAAH!* Help… H-Help me. Please… *heuk*… please… I’m sorry. I…!”

“…”

*‘Where am I?’*

*'Did I get teleported? Maybe I've always been here from the very beginning?*

*'Did I get hit by a mental-type spell? What in the world…*

*'What in the world is this space that looks like it's made from mana itself?'*

“*AAAAH!!* Please… please…”

I couldn't see the archmage, but I saw a familiar figure in the distance.

*‘Raynan?’*

He was Raynan of Extinction…

He wasn’t alone, and someone was dragging him away.

It was a woman wearing a nun outfit, and she looked indifferent as she dragged Raynan away.

Anyone could tell that Raynan was in a really bad condition. It seemed like his arms and legs had been severed and only his head was still attached to him. An unknown substance was flowing out of his abdomen, and he was yelling for help like a madman.

I had to save him.

I knew that was the right thing to do, but my body wouldn't move, as I had never seen a sight as bizarre as this sight before me. It was embarrassing to say this as an adventurer summoned to this continent, but this sight would terrify just about everyone.

*Clang…*

The woman clad in a nun outfit hung Raynan on a hook. Her eyes showed no emotions whatsoever as if she were hanging a piece of meat rather than a human being. It wasn't just Raynan of Extinction. Those who were there with us at the time were there, and they were… groaning and wriggling while hanging from a giant hook.

"*AAAAAH!*"

"Run… run! Squiat! Run…" someone shouted.

"Robinwood?" I said.

"I said run!" Robinwood yelled.

*Clench! Clench! Clench!*

"*AAAAAH! AAAAAH!*"

*Clench! Clench! Clench!*

"Run!" he yelled.

With a pale face, he moved further away in an instant. Behind him, the mage

with the big hat was walking slowly.

“W-Where are the bad people… hiding…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“…”

“W-W-Where are the bad people hiding? W-Where are the bad people… who made my oppa… cry? *Heuk… kgh…”* Jung Ha-Yan questioned.

“Damn it… where am I? Where am I?!” I shouted.

“W-Where… are the bad people, Sora?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“Squiat! Squiat! Do something! Squiat! Help us! Help us! *Heuk…* help us…!”

*‘What… is this place? Am I in Hell?’*

“…”

“…”

A dark red spider leg descended and pierced their figures hanging from a hook.

“The bad people. Are here. *Sniffle*,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“*Ahhh—cough*!”

“He’s running! He’s running away! The bad man is running away! Follow him! Follow him, Sora!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

# CHAPTER 1036
# CLEANUP (19)

Fear rather than reason dominated my body. Not only were my teeth chattering, but my hands and feet were shaking as well. I couldn't move at all.

— Ready or not, here I come.

"…"

— Ready or not, here I come.

*'Crazy. She's crazy. Shit… she's insane.'*

"The bad man is running away! He's running away, Sora!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

*'Damn it… who the hell is Sora? Where the hell… is Han Sora?'*

"He's over there! Over there! There!" Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed.

*'She's completely nuts. She's… '*

"He's over there!" Jung Ha-Yan shouted.

She wasn't talking about me.

"*Ahhh!* Help me! Help me! *Ahhhhh!*" Robinwood screamed while running.

He had a bow and melee weapons, but he wasn't even thinking about resisting.

The murderer wearing the white hat was following him with a dagger in hand.

I couldn’t understand why she was using a dagger. I was confused as to why she was trying to get close, and I was also confused about why she was swinging her dagger in the air.

I assumed she wanted to know what it felt like to be prey, but she was crouching for some reason. Anyone would describe this scene as grotesque, and I couldn't help but wonder whether murderers in horror movies looked like her.

The murderer clad in white was swinging her dagger while sniffling, and she wasn’t really moving fast. She’d even trip from running too fast, and she'd sometimes yell a bunch of nonsense while swinging her dagger in the air, giving Robinwood enough time to widen the distance between them.

Despite that, she was getting closer and closer to Robinwood.

*‘Why won’t you fight back?’*

I wanted to ask that question to myself.

*‘Why can’t I swing my spear?’*

Why wasn’t I using the spear to pierce the neck of the white mage?

*‘We have no chance.’*

I was afraid.

Just like me, Robinwood was frightened, and all he could think about was getting far away from this place. The white murderer’s dagger was getting closer to him, but all he could do was cower in fear.

The other girl wasn’t all that different.

Saint of Forsaken Sun Hee-Young was clearly different from the white murderer I had seen earlier, but she was creepy as well. She walked slowly with sadness in her eyes, and she was reciting a prayer with a rosary in hand.

It was an elegy for her upcoming victim.

When she extended her hand out towards the one who was running away, I saw ghosts wearing priest uniforms appear from behind her.

*"Heretic. She's a heretic! Heretic!"*

Before I knew it, the noble-looking ghosts transformed into murderers.

*"Kill them! Offer the heretic's heart to the Goddess. Give the sinner the mace of pain for insulting the Priest of Prophecy!"*

"*AAAAAH!*"

A hymn made of screams and unpleasant noises made me feel like my ears were going to bleed. The ghosts surrounded the escaping man. Then, I saw something red. It was such a grotesque scene that I wondered whether he was being surrounded by zombies or those famous Gluttonous Mouths.

*Rip. Riiip. Riiiiip.*

"Please… please spare me. Please…"

"I'm not the one punishing you for your sins. Please don't forgive this sinner. May he burn and suffer in the flames of hell forever," Sun Hee-Young said while crying quietly.

"There he goes! There he is! He's running, Sora!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

"*Ah!* Please do not extend your hand of salvation to them," Sun Hee-Young added.

"Kill him! Kill him! Kill hiiim!" Jung Ha-Yan screamed.

"*Heuk… heuuk…* eternal rest," Sun Hee-Young mumbled while crying.

*'They're crazy.'*

“I found him, Sora! Over here!” she yelled.

*‘Damn it! Damn it… damn it!’*

She was definitely after me.

“Sora—*Ah!*” she screamed. The white murderer seemed to have tripped on something, but I had no courage to attack her. I had to get away from her no matter what.

That was all I could think about.

Just then, Father Lee Ki-Young’s voice echoed in my ears.

— You’re thinking that things have gotten pretty bad, right?

*‘Damn it… ’*

— *Ah!* What the heck? Move, Commander. Why do you keep asking me to show you?

*‘What?’*

— No, Commander. This isn’t a game. What? Does this look fun to you? You can’t commercialize this one because Ha-Yan made it.

*‘Jin Cheong? Jin Cheong of the Republic? Are they together right now?’*

*'Oh yeah, they’re supposedly meeting. Those scums were working together all this time. They’re known as the Hero of the Continent, Saint of Miracles, and the Hero of Shadows… but they’re all the same.'*

“*Pant… pant… pant…*”

I was completely out of breath.

“He’s running… he’s running away!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

"*Pant…*"

I couldn't stop running.

I ran across a space filled with a dark red light, and I saw pieces of meat hanging from hooks.

*'Can I buy time… '*

I took down the people hanging from the hooks, and I started running once again. Just as I expected, the white murderer swung her dagger towards those who were running away. Those people were buying me some time, but it was futile.

"The exit… Where's the exit?" I mumbled.

"…"

"Damn it. Where is the exit," I said.

— I wonder where the exit is? Want my help? It wouldn't be any fun if things just ended like this, so I'll help you.

*'A trap?'*

— It's not a trap. I can see everything you're doing right now. You think I'd use a silly trap like this just to trick you? You're flat on the ground right now. Are you going to crawl your way out? *Ah!* I suggest you hold your breath for a moment.

I stopped and instinctively held my breath…

"I-I thought he was here," Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

"…" "M-M-Maybe he's not here. He must be elsewhere. He must've run somewhere else. What do I do, S-Sora? *Ah!* S-S-Sora isn't here," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

She was close. I could hear her footsteps. I felt cold sweat breaking out all over me, and I was afraid to make even the slightest noise. I covered my mouth with my hand. I was running out of breath, but the fate that awaited me if she discovered me was certainly more painful than suffocating to death.

*'Whoo… whoo… '*

Just then, I heard a voice that made my heart stop.

"I-I found him," Jung Ha-Yan said.

*'Please… please… '*

— It's not you.

I heard her footsteps moving away. Obviously, I couldn't even think about responding to Father's Lee Ki-Young's voice, which echoed in my ears nonstop.

I had lost my sanity a long time ago, and all I could think about was getting away from here.

— Take a right from there. You just need to go a little further. *Ah!* Not there. I think Miss Hee-Young is on patrol.

*'What the hell is his goal?'*

— Run a little faster and move quieter. Ha-Yan is coming. I think she'll be there soon…

*'Damn it, damn it… damn it!'*

— It's Ha-Yan! It's her! She's coming!

"*Ahhhhhhhh!*"

— I’m joking, I’m joking, so don’t be so surprised. *Pfft! Hahaha.* Look at you. *Pfft!*

“Damn it… how…”

— You don’t know how things turned out this way? I know very well how it turned out this way. You know, people shouldn’t live beyond their means. You’ll only end up in trouble if you try to obtain more than you can handle. That's bad, right? Right? Yeah, you’re right.

“Damn it…”

— It’s true that I want to see you in pain. I must’ve been feeling stressed these days. You’re probably wondering why I’m helping you find the exit, right? I just want to see you struggle. I want to see how much you’re going to struggle. Do you have the guts to match your greed? That’s what I want to see. If things go well, I might forgive you.

“…”

— Hey, fishy, I’m only going to tell you this. I think the Federation is going to go through a major reorganization. I was preparing to transform Gregory into a symbolic figure of the newly reorganized Federation, and I prepared many things behind the scenes.

— Unfortunately… Gregory is dead, and that spot has become empty. That’s why I lost my mind and got angry at you.

— Everything went down the drain, so it’s natural I’d be angry… But were you aware that if you had just proven to me that you were qualified, I'd have no reason not to place you in that spot? It would take some time, but the Saint of the Sacred Democratic Country values talent the most.

“…”

— This is the end of our conversation. Ha-Yan will be coming soon. I’ll send you the exit route now, so try figuring things out on your own.

*'I-It's nearby.'*

I moved quickly. Whether I trusted him or not wasn't important.

The fact that there was a way to get out of here was important.

*'Please… please… '*

"*Pant… pant… pant…"*

*'Please… '*

I saw a place that looked like an exit.

"*Pant… pant…"*

I hurriedly took the final step into the exit and—

[Exit unavailable.]

[You haven't met the exit condition of Archmage Jung Ha-Yan's exclusive domain, Crimson Playground. You cannot escape.]

"*Uh…"*

- *Pfft! Hahahahahaha.*

"*Uhh…"*

— *Hahahahahahahaha!* You thought it was going to work, right? Right? You pretended to be stoic, but I knew you were expecting something. *Cough!* You're such a dummy. You fell for it again. Commander… I mean, Mr. Squiat.

The white murderer ran toward me innocently with a twisted smile tugging at her lips.

"H-Help me…" I begged.

— I don’t know…

“Help me, please…” I said.

— Should I…

“I was… wrong, Father Lee Ki-Young. Please…” I begged.

- *Hahahahaha.* I forgive you, but will Miss Hee-Young and Ha-Yan do the same?

“Please…” I said.

— *Pwahahahaha!*

“Y-You dirty bastard… You scum!” I shouted.

— *Mwahahahahahaha!*

“Is that all you know how to do?” I questioned.

I had no idea what I was saying.

My hand holding the spear was shaking, and I screamed with all my might.

I just wanted to avoid the murderer in front of me.

*‘Don’t come closer to me.’*

“Y-You didn’t succeed in the end. You have no way of getting rid of me legally, and this was your only way…” I said.

- What?

*‘Please don’t come closer, damn it.’*

“In the end, you're just afraid of losing! You couldn’t handle this issue properly, so you resorted to this method. T-This is your limit, Lee Ki-Young.

This is your limit!

"You're a failure! The only difference between you and me is that you were summoned to this place first, damn it!" I shouted.

*'Don't come closer, please… '*

— That's… bullshit… Your words won't work on me, so just stop. It sounds like you're trying to avoid our lovely Ha-Yan by provoking me, but that will only make me angrier.

"You weren't confident in finding evidence against me, so you resorted to this…" I trailed off.

-…

"You weren't confident in handling this legally… That's why you used this kind of method… and I—we… didn't know what was going on.

"Isn't that why you're angry?! Father Lee Ki-Young! I know guys like you very well! You're afraid of failure! Damn it!

"You hate failure because you've failed more than anyone! That's probably why you wear the mask of a saint. You want to hide your true self from everyone else!" I exclaimed.

—…

"You want to know why you're hiding behind the honorary cardinal mask? It's because you know better than anyone that your human side has failed more than anyone else.

"That's why you can't remove your mask. Y-You know better than anyone that no one will look at the real you, and that's why you've been hiding your true self! Right? Am I right, you nauseating jerk?! You monster!" I exclaimed.

-…

“The reason you refused to join the game and crossed the line is that you weren’t confident, damn it! In the end, you lost, Lee Ki-Young! I beat you! I managed to remove your mask, so I'm the winner!

"I-I’m the winner! I won! I won because I made you take your mask off!” I shouted.

—…

“…”

— So what?

“…”

— Are you suggesting… we resolve this… legally?

“…”

— Is that what you’re trying to say? Handle this legally? You want me to handle this… as the honorary cardinal?

“…”

— So… you want to… have a religious trial, right? Mr. Squiat?

# CHAPTER 1037
# CLEANUP (20)

When I[1] opened my eyes quietly, I found myself in an empty space.

*'Am I alive…?'*

I was alive. I was alive, and I wasn't wounded. It was so dark that I couldn't see anything in this dark space, but I was certain of one thing—I was still alive.

Was it a dream? Was it? Was what I saw before losing consciousness… really a dream?

I unknowingly moved my arm and heard a *clank*.

When I saw that I was chained, I realized that what I had seen wasn't a dream.

The white murderer, the nun wandering crimson space with her ghosts, and my conversation with the honorary cardinal. I remembered provoking him to escape from the threat before me, and I could still remember his final words to me.

*'So… '*

It took a while for me to realize that my *dream* wasn't a dream.

I honestly had no idea what happened or what I had done.

I couldn't think of anything due to the nauseating stench and the screams everywhere.

I wasn't sure how long I'd been asleep, but it could also be because my brain

was taking a while to process the whole situation.

When I heard faint voices from afar, my brain was finally convinced that everything was real.

“O God…”

“O God… O Benigoa…”

*‘Damn it… ’*

Damn it…

The Heretic Inquisitors. I was in the interrogation room right now.

*"So… you want to… have a religious trial, right? Mr. Squiat?"*

I heard his voice again.

“Damn it… damn it!” I shouted.

Damn it… what could I do?

Someone seemed to have taken Benigoa’s Spear away from me, as I couldn’t feel any power inside me.

*‘Do I… Do I even have a chance?’*

It was nice to get away from the white murderer, but if a religious trial was held, would I win? No way. It was undeniable that I was in possession of Benigoa’s relic.

We had gotten rid of the traces, but the incident that led to the annihilation of Gregory’s party couldn't possibly disappear. The talented rangers of the Black Swan could find some traces of the incident within two months.

Moreover, I wasn’t sure when my party members were going to confess.

I trusted them, but…

*'No, we promised to be together.'*

Anyway, Honorary Cardinal Lee Ki-Young had no need to influence the trial, as I would most likely lose it, anyway. I could already imagine the horrible fate that awaited me. I was sure that everyone out there was aware of how the Heretic Inquisitors handled things.

Ito Sota's drowning in holy water had become such a famous story that I was aware of its details, even though I was summoned here later on.

At the time, I believed that it was exaggerated, but now that I was in this situation. I finally understood that they were not lying at all. I was sure I'd suffer the same horrible fate as Ito Sota. No, it could be a fate worse than that.

How did things come to this?

*'If I… If I can at least put up a fight… If I can put up one last fight… '*

The door opened, and I heard a familiar voice. "Hello, Mr. Squiat."

"…"

*He* greeted me cautiously.

With a *click*, the room suddenly became bright, forcing me to frown and squint my eyes.

As my vision adjusted to the light, I looked up and saw the figure speaking to me.

*'Father Lee Ki-Young.'*

He was dressed neatly in his priest uniform.

This was the first time I saw him since that day, and he was smiling quietly at me.

“Father Lee Ki-Young?” I said.

“You’re acting slightly differently compared to before. You suddenly sound respectful. You can talk more casually since you said all that bullshit last time,” Lee Ki-Young said.

I thought perhaps I was mistaken all this while, as he looked the same as the saint, but his scummy smile told me that I wasn’t mistaken at all.

He was clearly mocking me, and goosebumps popped up all over me when I saw that he looked kind of angry, but it wasn’t the same feeling Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young gave me.

I was sure the incongruity between the Father Lee Ki-Young before me and the usual Father Lee Ki-Young was the reason I was feeling this way.

*‘Is it possible for someone to have two different extreme sides?’*

Was Father Lee Ki-Young bipolar?

My mind went blank, and I felt like a bucket of cold water had been poured all over my head.

“I’m sorry… I-I…” I paused.

“*Huh?* What did you say? You don’t need to apologize. I can tell how much you’re regretting it, Mr. Squiat. You provoked me because you wanted to get away from our Ha-Yan. You said all those ridiculous things because of that, and I… understand.

"I also want to respect your decision to have a religious trial. I didn’t come here to negotiate with you. I just… I just wanted to see what you look like right now and… more importantly… I want to tell you that you were wrong,” he said.

“What? What… are you…”

*‘What the hell is he talking about?’*

“I clearly told you that you failed, right? I’m sure I did, Mr. Squiat,” he said.

Lee Ki-Young sat on the chair quietly and held up a hand mirror.

The ringtone echoed, and I immediately heard a voice.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung?"

— Yes, Mr. Ki-Young? What’s… wrong?

"Mr. Hyun-Sung, what would you do if I were a really bad person?"

*‘What?’*

— What?

"What would you do if I were a *really, really* bad person?"

— No way you're a bad person.

*‘What the hell… is he talking about right now?’*

Why was he suddenly talking to Kim Hyun-Sung? What was he trying to prove here?

"What would you do if you found out that I had been deceiving you all this time?"

And that was when I recalled my furious words toward him at the Crimson Playground…

To provoke Father Lee Ki-Young into saving me from the white murderer, I told him that he was the one who had failed, not me.

*‘It can’t be… ’*

I couldn’t believe it, and I couldn’t understand it at all.

*‘Is he trying to prove that I'm wrong? Is he trying to show that there’s someone who truly cares for him?’*

It made sense… but other than that…

*‘Did he come all the way here… to show that he didn’t fail?’*

I was sure that was why he was angry. His actions were so childish that it convinced me that he had some kind of trauma related to it. It had to have been a traumatic moment for him, and I was sure of it, as he had come all the way here to prove it to me.

— No way…

"I’m saying *if*. What would you do if I told you that I’ve been wearing a mask all this while?"

—…

"…"

— It’s okay. It probably won’t matter.

"How come?"

— Because it's you. Anyway, did… something happen?

"No, nothing happened…"

— Whether you’re wearing a mask or not, you’re still Mr. Ki-Young.

With a *click*, he closed the hand mirror and stared smugly at me.

“I think you’re wrong. *Hahaha*.”

*'C-Crazy bastard.'*

"You're wrong. Who failed? Who failed?" Father Lee Ki-Young mocked me.

*'Has the guild master of the Blue Guild… been brainwashed?'*

I was finally convinced his trauma was the reason he had visited me today.

It was a way to break his mask…

*'I can probably beat him.'*

If I used that to my advantage at the trial, I'd have a chance. No, if I were to provoke him here, I could end up going to the continental court. I had many choices; there were so many that I couldn't choose just one…

"*Ah*, and you're scheduled to go to the US today at 9 o'clock," Lee Ki-Young said.

"What?"

"Of course, you'll be executed. Your crime is attempting to murder Gregory. Why is it attempted murder? He's alive, and he'll be a witness today," Lee Ki-Young said.

"T-That's ridiculous! Shit! You think… you'll get away with this?!" I shouted.

"I mean, it's true that you tried to kill Gregory and took the relic. Those are more than enough reasons to execute you," he said.

"I want a proper trial!" I demanded.

"There's no need for a trial because the evidence is clear. Actually, Gregory and I weren't expecting much, but Robinwood of Frenzy helped us in tracking down Gregory. It'll take a few months for him to recover, but it all worked out in the end," he explained.

“W-What…”

“You should take care of your own life before judging others. You should live a righteous life before giving advice to people and talking about masks as well as what’s real or not. How many people do you think truly care and love you?” Lee Ki-Young asked with a smirk.

*'I-It’s like I'm staring at a demon.'*

Lee Ki-Young pointed at the screen and I saw the guild members and comrades whom I had spent a long time working with.

— H-He’s a demon. Squiat… transformed into a demon and then Gregory…

Those were Raynan of Extinction's words.

— We wanted to stop, but we couldn’t. The demon’s power was controlling us.

Robinwood of Frenzy…

— When he stretched his hand out toward Benigoa’s relic, there was a wave of disturbing energy, and the demonic power seemed like it was going to devour Goddess Benigoa’s holy light…

Those words were from my comrades whom I had known all the way from the tutorial dungeon.

— I-It’s all his fault

Even those I called friends… testified against me.

“Don’t be ridiculous! This is nonsense!!! Damn it! You bastard! You scum! Yeah! Y-Y-You…” I stuttered.

“*Pfft! Bwahahahaha!* I know you’re just trying to buy time by saying ridiculous things, but you know that's not going to work, right? I'm sure you

already know that I didn't come here to argue with you but vent my anger.

*"Ah!* By the way, they've been sentenced to t twenty years in prison," he informed me.

"H-How dare you! Did you have to—"

"Go this far? Yeah, of course, Squiat. Squiat, no one cares about you. Contrary to what you said with confidence, no one loves your true self," Lee Ki-Young interrupted me.

"You're crazy! Crazy bastard! You lunatic!" I shouted.

He wasn't in his right mind.

Getting involved with him was… a mistake.

"Looks like it's almost 9 o'clock," Lee Ki-Young said.

"What? I-It's…"

"I even asked them to make it as painful as possible," Lee Ki-Young added.

"…"

"So hang in there, Mr. Squiat."

"…"

"*AAARGH!*"

"…"

"*AAAAARRRGGGHHH!* H-Help me…!" I begged.

"…"

"*AAAAAAARGH!*"

*An illustration of Kim Hyun-Sung is attached on the next page.

wooden spoon: It’s Kim Hyun-Sung wearing a hanbok!

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1. Mr. Squiat's Point of View ☜

# CHAPTER 1038
# PICNIC (1)

"…"

"…"

"Oppa," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"*Hm?*"

"The Blue Guild looks pretty relaxed," she said.

"It's been handled, right? What's wrong? Are you that busy at the Continental Protection Management Committee?" I[1] asked.

"That's easier said than done, and… there aren't any huge issues at the Committee. Colonel Smith has been pretty busy, though. I was worried that the entire guild was like him, but it looks like only Colonel Smith and his team are like that.

"I think he visited us three or four times yesterday… No adventurer has yet to die from overworking, right? It'll be interesting if Colonel Smith becomes the very first adventurer to die that way," Lee Ji-Hye answered.

"…"

"So helpful," Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

"Right?" I said.

"I'm talking about you, not Colonel Smith. You have a really good eye. I know he's a great combatant, but when you said you were going to use him as the press secretary, I honestly questioned your decision.

"However, the results showed that you were right. The fact that he's from the Federation has worked to our advantage. *Ah!* Gregory is okay as well," Lee Ji-Hye informed me.

"Are you talking about the sad interview that made the denizens of the Federation cry? That made me cry as well, noona," I said.

"It was a pretty memorable scene," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

*'Gregory didn't do anything wrong, but… '*

What he had done was pretty effective. When he woke up in the hospital, he appeared in several media outlets, including press conferences.

*'At least he's a man of perseverance.'*

Gregory couldn't really move, but he actually appeared at an official press conference and kneeled before the denizens of the Democratic Country and Federation, who were worried about the recent incident.

He lowered his head despite being severely injured, making it the most memorable scene of the year. Who would criticize Gregory when he had asked them to trust the Federation one last time and that he wouldn't let that incident happen ever again? He also looked pretty desperate and sincere, to boot.

Moreover, the scene was even more sincere due to the fact that he had no time to prepare a script for it.

The comrades who fought with him were now with Benigoa.

I'd understand if he ended up collapsing because of that, but he was actually thinking about the bigger picture, which was surprising even to me.

His actions were not enough to quell the dissatisfied politicians, but at least he had succeeded in capturing the hearts of the people and their opinions.

Colonel Smith was also doing great at breaking the confidence of those politicians and ensuring that they wouldn't be able to ignore the public.

“He left for the sanctuary, even though he hasn't recovered yet. He’s truly a man of perseverance. Personally, I don’t like his type, but it wouldn’t be so bad to have him nearby. His beard is pretty cool, and his mindset is better than Kim Hyun-Sung,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“No one asked the Continental Protection Management Committee to intervene, right? No one complained as well?" I asked.

“Of course, there were some complaints. Do you know how much time and money went into the Federation Restoration Project? It's not strange for people to feel dissatisfied at the fact that the money all went to Squiat and those scums in power.

"There are also many people dissatisfied with how aggressive you were with this project. I'm sure the complaints will die down soon, but…” Lee Ji-Hye paused.

“Yeah, I should use this opportunity to change everything. There has to be a law against total corruption,” I said.

“The investigation team and the Heretic Inquisitors have already been dispatched to the Federation. Isn’t that good enough? Did you not do all these to push those scums out?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“It’s kind of complicated if I tell you from the very beginning…” I said.

“And how did you manage to execute Squiat? His execution wasn’t public, which has never happened before,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“You want to know?” I asked.

“No, you don’t need to tell me. I’m sure you handled it well. I asked because I was curious, and it’s been a while since you were so spiteful.

"It's been a while since you got angry, so I'm wondering what Squiat had done to make you so angry. That's what I'm curious about," Lee Ji-Hye answered.

*'Look at her.'*

I could see hearts in her eyes. She was intentionally staring at me with *that* look.

*'She's asking despite knowing everything.'*

Ji-Hye noona definitely knew everything. After all, she had her own information network and ears inside the Vatican, so it'd be strange if she had no idea.

"You know I love you, right? My other half," Lee Ji-Hye asked.

*'I knew she was going to act like this.'*

"My soulmate. Don't worry about what those stupid people say. Even if the world betrays you, I'll be beside you, okay?" Lee Ji-Hye said.

"It's nothing like that," I told her.

"*Aww*, our Ki-Young is cute. Come here, want me to hug you? Were you heartbroken by the thought that nobody really liked you?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"I told you it's nothing like that," I said.

"You're really cute when you act like that," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"Stop it with the jokes," I said.

"The problem is that I'm not joking. Your self-esteem is pretty low, and I've been wondering whether you became mentally ill upon getting summoned here, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

"Did you have a traumatic experience back on Earth? Come to think of it, was it Lee Yul-Ha? I never really heard anything about your life back on Earth except for the fact that you have a younger sister," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"There's nothing interesting to tell you. More importantly, I've been thinking… and it's not satisfying enough to just drive out the Federation scums," I told her.

"What?"

"I think we need to start over from scratch," I suggested.

"Will the people understand that decision, though?" Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

"I want to change everything, starting from the tutorial dungeon," I said.

"…"

"Is that possible?" she asked.

"Probably. I talked to Benigoa and Belial, and it didn't seem like it was impossible," I replied.

Lee Ji-Hye looked interested.

"I learned many things from the Squiat incident, and I realized that there's going to be no end to it if there are no further changes. There are too many people who believe they're the protagonist after surviving the tutorial dungeon and ending up in this world.

"Don't you think it'll be better to educate them early on?" I asked.

"*Hmm…*"

"I'm suggesting that we turn the tutorial dungeon into a cram school. We can teach them basic knowledge about dungeons and about the influential figures here inside that school…" I informed her.

“So you want to show them who’s in power from the very beginning. It won’t be so bad if that’s even possible. We can create a safe zone, keep the people in line, and tell them many things as if they were about to embark on a tour all over the continent. We are then going to send the summoned ones to different parts of the continent.

"But how are you going to select the eliminated candidates?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“…”

“It’s not like tutorial dungeons just appear out of thin air. The system programmed that content, so if we accept everyone who was abandoned on Earth, the continent would become overpopulated. In other words, we have to let go of some people.

"Now that I think about it, the tutorial dungeon is pretty old-fashioned, but it’s the best in sorting out the people incapable of adapting to the continent. There’s a reason the system chose a method like that,” Lee Ji-Hye added.

“*Hmm.*”

“To us, it seems very old-fashioned, but to the system, it’s the easiest and simplest way to go about it,” Lee Ji-Hye added.

“No, we don’t need to sort them out. Think about it. Is there really a reason for us to consider the situation on Earth? Altanus was the one who made the deal carelessly. I’m going to start sorting out the refugees as well and tell Benigoa not to send the invitations to everyone anymore,” I said.

“Then what are you going to do about the abandoned refugees?” she asked.

“Belial said he’ll try negotiating with the other dimensions,” I answered.

“Another dimension? Where?” she asked.

“That’s none of our business, noona. We just need to worry about those who

come here," I said.

"The people summoned here are lucky… I feel bad for those being summoned to other places like the one Belial had introduced to you. They're not going to be sold to some apocalyptic dimension, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

Actually, they were being sold.

*'Look at her asking when she already knows the answer. Where do you think we're getting the funds to update the tutorial dungeon? Picking up the refugees from Earth and selling them to another dimension is what I call a creative economy.'*

This was made possible because Belial was taking care of it.

Anyway, less than thirty percent of people were capable of clearing the tutorial dungeon.

Rather than letting seventy percent of people lose their lives in vain, it'd be more reasonable to sell them to another dimension. It was more humane, too.

I was sure the other dimensions had their own rules, but it basically guaranteed that seventy percent of the refugees would survive a bit longer. It was profitable to both sides and making everyone happy was what I called revolutionary.

It was strange that we had never thought of a way to make all the managers of this place happy, but I understood why. If it weren't for my connection to Belial, this project would be impossible.

*'We should have charged Earth during the first deal.'*

The old Altanus and Benigoa had to have no idea how to make a proper deal.

"The situation has worked out for us. I have an idea as to why Altanus decided to take in the refugees first and why the summoned people were

invited to the continent, but the continent is no longer the continent of the distant past.

"The continent has stabilized, and we no longer need a summoned warrior to save the continent," I explained.

"That's true. The important thing is that we need adventurers to help the continent run smoothly. The continent cannot survive without summoned people. I don't think it's a bad idea. We can keep accepting refugees from Earth, but we sort them out and accept only those we need.

"Then, we're going to educate them so that the continent's economy and system will run even smoother. We can consider it a welcome party for the newcomers—no, a workshop for the new recruits," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"That's it."

"So, who's taking care of that right now?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Belial," I answered.

"Commander Jin isn't going to join us?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"He probably thinks that a tutorial dungeon is required," I replied.

"That man is living in the past. We need to move fast and keep up with the trend. We don't need a tutorial dungeon right now… But is it okay to have Belial take care of this?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Lauren is working with him as well," I told her.

"*Ah! Ahh…* Lauren… hates demons… due to that incident. She must be grateful for what you did for the Federation. You decided to support the Federation and the Order of Lauren in the revamped tutorial dungeon, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Yeah."

“Then it shouldn’t be a problem. I agree that Belial is competent, but it's not in a good way. I'm at ease knowing that Lauren is going to work with him. I honestly want that project for myself… Can you give me a piece of it ?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“No, you’re on vacation,” I answered.

“…”

“Didn’t I tell you to keep your schedule open? I want to go on a short group trip with the Blue Guild and a few of our acquaintances,” I told her.

It was time to take a break.

“When?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Right now,” I answered.

“What will you tell the public?” she asked.

“The honorary cardinal is currently recovering,” I replied.

“Where are we going?” she questioned.

“I’m not sure…” I said.

“And the preparations?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Hyun-Sung prepared everything,” I informed her.

“…”

“…”

“I see, but this is an actual vacation, right?” Lee Ji-Hye questioned me.

“…”

"How about Dialuria, Max, Domi, Cheru, Sera, and Thro? Are they going as well?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

*'Who knows?'*

---

1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1039
# PICNIC (2)

It had been a while since we were so busy.

"*Ah!* I said move it over there! Ki-Mo bro, bring that here!" Park Deok-Gu instructed.

"Okay, b-but this is pretty heavy," Ahn Ki-Mo said.

"Stop being such a baby, Mister Ki-Mo," Kim Ye-Ri commented.

"Give it here. I'll carry it. Man… didn't you eat breakfast? You don't have any energy," Park Deok-Gu complained.

"I'll… leave it up to you," Ahn Ki-Mo said.

"Dummy."

As always, the Park-Ki-Ri siblings were grumbling while moving the luggage.

*'They're really… '*

A part of me was worried about Kim Ye-Ri and Park Deok-Gu, but seeing them act like that put my mind at ease. They were still walking on eggshells around me, so I was convinced that they weren't completely comfortable around me just yet, but I believed this picnic would put *their* mind at ease.

*'They've been through a lot.'*

Our pig was pretty simple-minded. I was sure he'd forget everything upon eating delicious food and taking a nap. Our sensitive Kim Ye-Ri also needed to relax.

“A picnic. All of a sudden? Sounds really. Stupid,” Kim Ye-Ri mumbled.

Despite that, she looked happy and was smiling like a purring cat.

Kim Ye-Ri was always wearing her combat gear to the extent that I questioned whether she had any other clothes except for her combat gear. However, it seemed that my assumption was just a bunch of nonsense, as she was dressed properly today.

I assumed that was the reason she went to square up with Hwang Jung-Yeon yesterday. I wasn’t sure who helped her pick out the outfit, but she was wearing a short one-piece dress and a rattan hat. Overall, she looked pretty good.

“Let’s leave our weapons behind,” Ahn Ki-Mo suggested.

“I already did. Mister Ki-Mo,” Kim Ye-Ri said.

“I’m talking about the daggers you’re hiding in your pocket,” Ahn Ki-Mo clarified.

Kim Ye-Ri took out her daggers, and the sight convinced me that old habits were truly hard to kill.

*‘That’s her problem.’*

“B-But…”

“I’m sure we won’t get into any fights, Miss Ye-Ri. A contractor has also agreed to provide guards, and we've taken care of everything around us. Our goal here is to really enjoy our break without any worries.

"I heard that you couldn’t sleep last night because you were so excited,” Ahn Ki-Mo revealed.

“What? Who told you that?” Kim Ye-Ri asked.

“I was just guessing—”

“*Eek!*” Kim Ye-Ri screamed.

Ahn Ki-Mo ran to the other side, and Kim Ye-Ri chased him. Thanks to Park Deok-Gu and Ahn Ki-Mo, Kim Ye-Ri could act her age. I had no idea when she started hanging out with them, but I was glad that they had influenced her positively.

*‘But that doesn’t mean it took care of all the problems… ’*

Kim Ye-Ri learned how to use weapons instead of going to school and enjoying her life.

I was sure there was a rotten side of her, so we need to really take care of her mental health, especially at her age.

“Ah-Young unni! Get Mister Ki-Mo!” Kim Ye-Ri shouted.

“*Huh?* O-Okay!” Yoo Ah-Young answered.

“You’re dead, Mister!” Kim Ye-Ri yelled.

Yoo Ah-Young, who was talking to Lee Chang-Ryeol, grabbed Ahn Ki-Mo in response to Kim Ye-Ri's roar.

Ahn Ki-Mo couldn’t outrun her anymore, and he fell to the ground with a *thud*.

“H-Hold on! You're hitting me in the bones! My bones!” Ahn Ki-Mo yelled.

“Don’t lie! I didn’t even hit your bones,” she said.

*‘Is this really a positive influence?’*

The other groups weren’t all that different. Sun Hee-Young wearing her nun outfit for the first time in a while was organizing her luggage, and Hwang

Jung-Yeon was stuffing her huge bag with anything she could stuff into it.

I wasn't sure why she was bringing so many things with her…

"You're bringing a lot more stuff than I imagined…" I remarked.

In contrast to her, Alps and Belier were busy moving luggage, so they had no time to pack their own bags.

*'They just look like they're working.'*

They were even sweating.

*'Our guild is really old-fashioned.'*

II considered recruiting a few more young members.

The new recruits of our guild didn't have to move faster than the older members. There weren't any traditions like that, but I heard such traditions were common in the Black Swan Guild, as their members were pretty disciplined.

One of the Blue Guild's goals was to have a hierarchy, but rather than saying that someone had forced Alps and Belier into moving luggage, they probably volunteered for it.

"Do I… move that over there, Miss Alps?" Belier asked.

"That's right, Belier. Did you hear when we were leaving?" Alps asked.

"I haven't heard anything. I'll ask after moving this," Belier said.

I thought it'd be better if we got about five more new members. I couldn't imagine how happy they'd be after hearing the news that we were going to get new members, but I was sure they would never imagine that one of them would be Colonel Smith.

Jo Hye-Jin was talking to Ji-Hye noona. Ha-Yan and Sora were standing next to me.

Park Lian was examining the carriage, but I actually didn't notice her arrival.

I got the feeling that no matter how much we tidy up, this would never end.

*'That's why I suggested we take the warp gate.'*

There were a few people suffering from the idea that traveling to the destination was part of the trip. I was talking about the guild staffers who were suffering more than Belier and Alps.

*'I feel bad for them.'*

We were just going on vacation, so I couldn't help but think that Kim Hyun-Sung had made too big of a deal about it.

*'This is way too big for a break.'*

Some of the staffers had determined faces, and I couldn't help but think that they treated this vacation as a project of a lifetime.

They were working as if their job security depended on this one project.

They were completely different from the guild members who were simply packing for a trip. They kept checking the list of items on the Goddess' Hand Mirror, but some of them were even having debates.

Meanwhile, Miss Kim Mi-Young was mumbling nonstop while wearing earphones.

They brought items I had never seen before.

*'I think that's a large water tank.'*

I saw Mirror Salmon swimming in the large water tank.

*‘Rainbow Cotton Candy? I’m tired of it now, man.’*

The cotton candy machine was sitting on a large cart. There was a giant, mysterious tent, and I wasn’t sure why there were pre-fabricated building frames.

*‘We’re not moving bases, are we? Why… does it seem like we have more luggage than when we went to the Saint’s Sanctuary?’*

*'We aren't spending more money on this picnic than we do on expeditions, right?'*

I saw carts filled with useless items. There were so many items that someone would think that we were on our way to heaven. If reporters were here, rumors would spread about how the Blue Guild was moving their headquarters.

“We’re here, darling.” A voice echoed beside me. It came from none other than Cha Hee-Ra. She was wearing jeans and a sleeveless top.

“*Ah*, Hee-Ra noona,” I greeted.

There were quite a few people from the Red Mercenary Guild who had decided to join us on our vacation. I could see them, and they were wearing casual clothes. The only person whose name I could still remember among them was Choi Young-Ki, the loyal subordinate of Hee-Ra noona. I had seen the faces of the other members before, but they were closer to Park Deok-Gu than me.

“Hey, it’s been a while!” Park Deok-Gu greeted.

“How have you been?”

“Have you been doing well?”

The muscular men hugged and greeted each other.

I turned and saw Hee-Ra noona greeting Jung Ha-Yan.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan said that she’s happy to see you,” Han Sora informed.

“I see. Have you been doing well?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan said that she’s been doing well. She wants to ask if you’ve been doing well—”

“What’s going on? Do I have to talk to you? Han Sora, was it?” Cha Hee-Ra interrupted her.

“*Huh? Ah…* yes,” she replied.

“*Hmm…*”

“…” “Have you considered joining the Red Mercenary Guild?” she asked.

“What? I-I…”

Jung Ha-Yan bit her lips, and she looked as if she wanted to push Cha Hee-Ra away.

However, Cha Hee-Ra couldn’t be pushed back that easily, but she took a few steps backward and patted Jung Ha-Yan’s head.

Jung Ha-Yan wriggled, looking like she wasn't a fan of it.

“*Eek*… D-Don’t touch me!” Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed.

“I greeted you, so you should greet me yourself, don’t you think so?” Cha Hee-Ra questioned.

Leaving Cha Hee-Ra’s arms, Jung Ha-Yan grabbed both Han Sora and me before glaring at the former. As always, Hee-Ra noona didn’t really seem to care. She actually smiled and said, “I owe the Blue Guild a lot.”

“*Huh?* What are you talking about?” I asked.

“Our guys have received a lot of help from you guys. You guys made an exclusive contract with our guys for this picnic,” Cha Hee-Ra replied.

“…”

“…”

“The Blue Guild? *Ah*, the guard duty was assigned to the Red Mercenary Guild?” I asked.

“No, not that… We were assigned with a raid… Wait, you don’t know?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

*‘I don’t know anything about this… ’*

I had never heard of it…

“The vacation spot. We were told to get rid of all the monsters there…” Cha Hee-Ra informed me.

I don’t know anything about this.

“A few incompetent guild members ruined a few businesses… so we needed something to raise money, and the Blue Guild sent us a commission just in time. Thanks to you, we won’t have to worry about our funds for the next few years,” Cha Hee-Ra explained.

*'How much money did we offer? The Red Mercenary Guild actually won't have to worry about their funds for the next few years?'*

“I recall you guys getting help from the Magic Tower. The Red Mercenary Guild is pretty skilled overall, but we can’t go up against those experts in the manufacturing industry.

"Having a potion business is just great. Your potions are being distributed everywhere, so you’re sweeping in the gold. You also spread all that gold over Lindel, which has been helping the economy.

"To be honest, Lindel is thriving because of you," she continued.

*'Did we give the Red Mercenary Guild a special commission or something?'*

I couldn't really understand what was going on.

"What kind of commission was it?" I asked.

"An expedition in the Laves Desert," Cha Hee-Ra answered.

"*Huh?*"

"I heard you're going there for a picnic. We had a hard time getting rid of all the monsters there, but I managed to relieve some stress. The Union was happy as well," Cha Hee-Ra informed me.

*'T-That's an underdeveloped region, and it's the size of two hunting grounds combined.'*

The desert elves and lizardmen even avoided that place, and the difficulty level of the region was so high that only Epic adventurers and above were permitted to enter. In other words, it was a desolate hunting ground.

It was abandoned by everyone because the monsters there were so useless that they couldn't even be sold for materials. There was really no reason to hunt there, and it wasn't rich in resources, so there was no reason to go on an expedition there.

The region's investment value was so low that the region was abandoned.

It was a desert—an endless desert. We wouldn't get any profit from it even if we tried our best.

*'But our guild… decided to go there?'*

*'We're going there… for vacation?'*

“Kim Hyun-Sung…” I mumbled.

“…”

“You… crazy bastard…” I said, gnashing my teeth.

*An illustration of Lee Ki-Yeon is attached on the next page.

wooden spoon: It’s an illustration of Lee Ki-Yeon wearing a hanbok!

# CHAPTER 1040
# PICNIC (3)

*‘That crazy jerk.’*

He was really… out of his mind. It was to the point that Kim Hyun-Sung’s parents ought to thank Earth. If he had stayed there and inherited his mother’s business… he would have ruined his parent’s life work in just a year.

People in the same field would talk every day about why a successful mid-sized business ended up getting ruined, and the busy ants who had invested for the sake of the owner’s face and vibe would weep.

*‘Maybe he had lost his financial sense… ’*

His parents had raised him to be too naive and free.

He was raised with no knowledge of the world.

Since they had given him freedom, they ought to have taught him how to use that freedom responsibly. He had turned out this way, as his parents only wanted to show him nothing but happiness in this world.

He was probably summoned here just as they were going to teach him the cold and harsh reality.

Even Jung Ha-Yan had a decent amount of knowledge when it came to finance.

She had a hard life back on Earth, so I knew how that developed. Her finance skills were better than Kim Hyun-Sung.

*'Does that guy even know where this money is coming from? Does he think the*

*gold coin fairy visits us every night and leaves a pile of gold coins? Does he think the money fairy visits his house on Earth every night?'*

“Did I… say something I shouldn’t have said?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“No, I’m glad you said it. I wouldn’t have known about it if you hadn't…” I answered.

To be honest, this one incident won’t cause the Blue Guild to close down, and it would not really affect us financially. The guild was extremely stable. If we were to cancel a few businesses that we were scheduled to open, we'd be able to handle the losses.

*‘No, whether we can handle the losses or not isn’t important. What’s important is that something like this* can *happen again.’*

*'Does Kim Hyun-Sung have some kind of grudge against me that he was trying to retaliate financially? Since he can't beat me up, is he trying to take revenge against me by making me suffer like this?'*

*‘It’s actually possible.’*

He was trying to inflict pain that was more painful than death or physical pain.

Otherwise, he wouldn’t be acting this way. He had already wasted much gold stabilizing the desert, and I was sure he had spent a lot more gold on other things to prepare for this trip. If he had planned all of this alone or had gotten help from the guild, I’d understand it, but he had received help from many different contractors.

I saw outsiders and not just the staffers of the Blue Guild. They were from some kind of design agency, traveling and camping agency, and party and event planning agencies. If they weren't the best in the continent, they wouldn't hire them, so he definitely spent a lot of money to hire them.

*‘Lindel Construction?’*

*'Why the hell is a construction company here? Why? Why does Kim Hyun-Sung want to talk with a dwarf craftsman?'*

I couldn't help but laugh at the ridiculous situation.

I decided to go on this trip to make myself feel better, but it was starting to stress me out.

"When are we leaving, darling?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"In about forty minutes… but it can be later than that. Strangers keep entering the guild, and…" I trailed off.

"…"

I saw a group of black mages.

If I hadn't been using Mind's Eye, I would have missed them. They were standing in the corner, looking around nervously and trying to blend in with the group as much as possible, but their gloomy and dark complexion made them stick out in my eyes.

"Miss Sora," I said.

"Yes, sir?" Han Sora replied.

"Please the group of black mages over there why they're here. They're a group of black mages, right? If they don't tell you, you can threaten them a little by using the Heretic Inquisitors," I instructed her.

"Okay. Please wait here, Miss Jung Ha-Yan," she said.

"G-Go ahead, Sora. *Ah!* O-O-Oppa, come to think of it…"

Jung Ha-Yan and I started talking about many different things.

Han Sora eventually came back to us.

“They said they're here because of a request…” Han Sora informed.

“A request?” I asked.

“They said they received a request from the guild master himself… They said they won’t cause any trouble and will leave as soon as they've completed the request,” she added.

“What’s… the request?” I asked.

“Using necromancy…” Han Sora muttered.

“…”

“Chanelia Hermes… the request is to bring Chanelia Hermes to the present world even for a short moment…” Han Sora replied.

*‘That’s ridiculous… ’*

“…”

*‘It’s really ridiculous… ’*

“…”

“…” “Is that even possible?” I asked.

“It's not impossible, sir. If the target has some regrets in their life and there is a catalyst to summon their soul… Actually, necromancy hasn’t been properly explored… so I’m kind of worried, but…” Han Sora paused.

“…”

“They… asked if we can pay the deposit first because… they have family to take care of, and they don’t know what might happen at the end of the trip, so they want to at least… send the deposit to them safely,” Han Sora added.

*‘We’re not that kind of guild.’*

The warriors of darkness had joined this event, putting their lives to make some money.

I couldn't imagine how shocked they were when Kim Hyun-Sung visited them for the commission. He already had a record of getting rid of the black mages, so they probably thought it was the end for them.

I was sure they were even more shocked when he asked them to summon Chanelia Hermes to this place again.

Of course, they couldn't decline. Despite thinking this was a trap and that they could be abandoned after everything, they still made the difficult decision to come here. They seemed relieved at the fact that Han Sora, the black mage of the guild, had decided to talk to them, but they were still understandably worried.

*'This is really an unimaginable situation.'*

I had never imagined that we'd end up using necromancy on Chanelia Hermes. I was sure that was the secret event. Kim Hyun-Sung wanted to revive them and ask them to make their final masterpiece.

To create that final masterpiece… I was sure they had prepared many materials.

I cast an empty gaze at Kim Hyun-Sung. Hee-Ra noona awkwardly patted Jung Ha-Yan before walking up to Sun Hee-Young.

Han Sora looked at me as if she was asking for the black mages' deposit.

"How much… is the deposit…" I asked.

"Well…"

"Actually, don't tell me. I don't want to know," I stopped her.

And that was when I heard a loud voice…

“*Ah!* Mr. Ki-Young!”

“…”

“I think we’re leaving soon.”

Kim Hyun-Sung was clearly excited. Perhaps the scene reminded him of the camping trip with his parents when he was young, or perhaps he was excited to see the results of the tons of gold he had spent on this.

*‘Spending money is fun, right?’*

I agreed that it was fun.

“Are you done getting ready? Do you need to check if there’s anything—”

“Getting ready?” I interrupted him.

“Yes.”

“I don’t even know what to prepare. I don’t know anything, after all,” I told him.

“What?”

“How am I supposed to answer you when you've taken care of everything by yourself? Is my opinion even important?” I questioned him.

“*Ah*… w-well you said you were going to prepare everything…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

“So, does it make it okay for you to do everything alone and tell me that it’s time to leave? Don’t you think I deserve to know what’s going on, what you’re doing, and how much money you've spent so that I’m prepared? Who is this break even for?” I complained.

“*Ah*… I see…”

Obviously, Kim Hyun-Sung looked worried, and he would never understand how things had turned out like this. Honestly, I was sure he wasn't thinking about giving me an excuse, as he was worried about one thing right now.

*'I'm tired of this.'*

He had probably realized that I was about to utter the words capable of breaking his heart, and he looked nervous at the possibility. His lips were closed tight, his eyes were shaking, and he was thinking about how he could ensure that he wouldn't hear those words again.

*'He probably doesn't even know what he did wrong.'*

I was sure he had no idea how much money he had spent so far, and it was all because he thought that it would be good to get whatever was the best.

When picking out the agencies, he probably didn't even consider getting a discount or what kind of free stuff he could obtain from them. He didn't even consider what he could do to get a discount or if he could get sponsored.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Ki-Young. I didn't think it through," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Why didn't you think it through?" I questioned.

"I-I…"

"You should go alone if you were going to handle it on your own. Why…" I paused.

"…"

"Is this why…"

"…"

*'No, let's not act like this.'*

I was going to complain, but…

*'He has good intentions… '*

It had been a while since we had a break, and I was sure he was really excited about it, too. We played a lot after the continental dungeon incident, but we never had a full trip like this one. We were busy taking care of unexpected incidents and cleaning things up.

We always talked about going somewhere, but we never actually went anywhere…

Upon receiving permission from me, he actually worked hard for this trip, so I was sure he'd be in a bad mood if I were to attack him for what he had done. The money had already been spent, and I'd only feel bad if I were to complain.

The entire trip would be useless if I ended up in a bad mood.

*'We can make that money back.'*

The money we had invested in Lindel would come back.

*'Since we already spent the money, we might as well go all out.'*

I was bothered by the fact that we were going to a desert, but I was sure it'd be worth it.

We spent so much money, after all.

*'Please… '*

The preparations were done, so I could only hope that the desert would end up being useful. It was a large area, so we could probably promote it as a tourist spot somehow.

"I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, Mr. Ki-Young," he said.

“It’s fine. I'm just a bit sensitive, especially on a day like this,” I said.

“It’s okay. Thinking about it now, I think I was being thoughtless,” he said.

*‘You’re too thoughtless. You’re the icon of thoughtlessness.’*

“Shall we get going?” he suggested.

I left on our trip angrily and…

“Welcome to Laves Desert!”

I saw a city with a large oasis.

“What’s… this?” I questioned.

“Come this way, please.”

“Why is there… a city here?” I asked.

“…” “Why is there a city here? There wasn’t an… oasis here…” I mumbled.

“…”

“How did they… build a city here?” I asked.

# CHAPTER 1041
# PICNIC (4)

*Every traveler has probably heard of a certain small city in the middle of the Laves Desert, which is famous as one of the ten wonders of the continent. The small city was chosen as one of the top tourist destinations along with the Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary, which is where the honorary cardinal had embarked on his ascetic path.*

*However, the atmosphere of the small city of Laves is quite different from the sanctuary.*

*If you're a traveler who is expecting to take the same ascetic path that the honorary cardinal had taken at the Cozy Sanctuary, you will be surprised by the small city of Laves.*

*Perhaps you will not be able to adapt to its environment, but I can assure you that you will never be disappointed.*

*It is said that the small city of Laves was built for the Sunset Swordsman and the Saint of Sacrifice and Revival. It is said that the Sunset Swordsman has personally completed an expedition to the Laves Desert to restore the health of the Saint of Sacrifice and Revival, whose condition was getting worse day by day.*

*The Sunset Swordsman was one of the builders of this city, along with many craftsmen.*

*…Omitted…*

*The largest oasis on the continent is considered a work of art rather than a work of nature, and there are other notable tourist attractions in addition to the oasis. For example… omitted…*

*— Excerpt from "A Guide for Travelers on the Continent"*

“Welcome to the Laves Desert!”

“Welcome to the Laves Desert!”

“Welcome to the small city of Laves!”

“Laves!”

“Laves!”

*‘I’m at a loss for words.’*

I wasn’t the only one who was surprised.

The people who thought that this was just a fancy camping trip were looking at each other in disbelief. They looked like they couldn't believe that the city before them actually existed.

The Desert Elves and Lizardmen were famous for their wanderlust, so the fact that they had stayed here to greet visitors and put flower lei around their necks meant that they had to have been hired at a high price.

Were they also taught to act and talk in an exaggerated way?

“Laves!”

“*Uh…* thanks…”

*‘I thought this was just a simple picnic.’*

The large oasis that surrounded the city stood out to me the most. There were trees that looked like palm trees and green grasses. The scenery was so high-quality that it couldn’t be made by humans.

The emerald water was so clear that I could see the floor beneath it, and there were edible fruits hanging from unknown plants. The fruits were

bigger than normal fruits.

The oasis resembled a large lake, and I was not sure how it was done, but…

*'Why are there animals here?'*

It was probably a natural phenomenon.

It was like the creatures that had been living in the harsh environment of the desert had decided to gather here. All the creatures were here except for the dangerous ones.

They were either drinking water from the oasis or were running around, which made me think this place really was heaven on earth. Of course, the Desert Elves and the other administrators had to be observing them to ensure that they wouldn't cause any trouble.

"It's not hot… either."

"That's right. The climate and temperature of the small city of Laves are managed by the mages. We're always doing our best so that all of you enjoy your vacation!" a guide exclaimed.

"*Ah*… I see."

*'I really can't get used to their energy.'*

"The Laves Oasis is always open, so you can visit us whenever you want! If you want to eat the fruit from the trees, let us know! *Ah!* You can also set up camp around the camp, so if any one of you wants to spend time nearby…" a guide informed.

"*Ah*… we got it," Park Deok-Gu said.

"How about we head inside the city?" a guide suggested.

*'It feels like we're on a group tour.'*

There were still people who had yet to arrive, and it truly felt like we were on a group tour.

For some reason, Kim Hyun-Sung was at the front walking with confidence. I almost smacked the back of his head upon getting reminded of the gold he had spent on this, but I understood where that confidence was coming from.

*'It's understandable. It's like… '*

It was like staring at a piece of artwork. I couldn't stop thinking about how the entire city was built really well.

The buildings had ornate and intricate patterns, and they were probably there to reflect the Ancient Desert Elves' unique style.

Each and every building was different, but they all seemed to be the same because of those patterns. The roads were well-maintained, but it felt like they had never been used. I could see that they had emphasized convenience while ensuring that their ancient roots would remain.

It felt like we had truly discovered an exotic resort. This place was better than the ideal desert city I had imagined.

*'If this were built in ancient times, it would be one of the ten wonders of the continent.'*

The others were busy looking around.

Hee-Ra noona was looking around calmly, but she came to a halt upon finding a huge tavern.

"There. What do they sell over there?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"It offers fruit wine and beer brewed by the desert elves and the lizardmen. I'm not sure if you're aware, but the beer brewed by the lizardmen is just as good as the ones brewed by the dwarves…" a desert elf replied.

“I've heard of that,” Cha Hee-Ra said.

“That’s probably because the lizardmen are private in nature,” the elf said.

“*Hmm…* since you said they’re just as good as the dwarves, then I’m curious,” she said.

“Would you like to try?” the desert elf asked.

“No, I’ll just head there. I probably need to take a look around, anyway. It’s bigger than I thought… and there’s one over there,” Cha Hee-Ra answered.

“Yes. As you can see, Laves boasts the largest resort facility on the continent. There’s a total of three taverns inside the city and they all have different concepts and offer different menus. For reference, there are a total of fourteen restaurants, and they were all carefully selected based on Father Lee Ki-Young’s approval…” the desert elf explained.

*‘When did I approve them? I've never approved any of them.’*

Lee Ji-Hye following slowly behind me asked, “What’s wrong? You said you enjoyed and visited those places often. Those are the restaurants you personally approved. Don't you know that they're pretty famous? The restaurant that sells Rainbow Cotton Candy is part of those restaurants."

*‘I want to remove that place from the list.’*

“*Ah.*”

“Of course, there are completely new restaurants waiting for you. If there are people who enjoy cooking, there’s a kitchen in your rooms, so feel free to use them!” the desert elf said.

“I-I’m glad. Aren't you glad, too, Sora?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

Sora didn’t look happy, as she still had to cook for Jung Ha-Yan even on this trip.

“Do you want to read books? In that case, I recommend visiting the public library! Not only does it have books that are popular on the continent, but it also has rare books that were discovered during the Desert Laves Expedition!

"You’ll see when you get there, and you can also get a preview of the books that have yet to be released,” the desert elf suggested.

“…”

“*Ah!* You can go shopping there,” the desert elf said.

“Shopping?”

“Yes. Just like the library, famous brands on the continent are here, along with brands from famous designers. In addition, you can try on rare items and outfits that are normally worn here. There are still more…” the desert elf trailed off.

*‘There really are a lot of things here.’*

I could tell that they had put a lot of thought into building this city. They had no idea what people would like, so they included everything. It was a city that claimed to provide a huge variety of entertainment for visitors to enjoy.

*‘The park is also pretty big.’*

They even had a large trail along with a museum and large statues.

There were so many things around us that I couldn’t get a proper look at them.

After walking for a while, I heard music playing on the streets.

Dancers started singing while dancing; the desert elves also turned on their instruments and played along. The lizardmen slammed their tails on the ground to match the rhythm, and our desert elf guide promoted the city with

exaggerated movements.

“Whatever you guys want to do, it’s all possible at the Laves Desert!”

*Boom!*

“Do you want to relax and unwind? Or do you want to enjoy a thrilling moment? Do you want to eat delicious food? Or do you want to see a view that will make your eyes?!” the desert elf yelled.

*Boom!*

*‘Ah, what’s with this performance?’*

*'I don’t really like this. It’s like I was watching a parade. That desert elf has to be a part of a traveling theater. Otherwise, they can't possibly move like that.'*

Perhaps it was because of the desert heat, but my face was getting hotter and hotter. I glanced at Kim Hyun-Sung and saw that he looked satisfied.

The music was nonstop.

The lizardmen raised their tail and struck the ground at once.

*Boom!*

Fireworks exploded in the distance…

*Crackle, crackle, crackle…*

“This is pretty awful, don’t you think?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

*‘Don’t say things like that. They have really good hearing, and you’ll hurt them.’*

“What is all of this, oppa? I think this city is better than I thought and can be pretty useful, so please tell them to get rid of that performance. Why are they ruining it when everything is already so great?” Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

"…"

*'Yeah, I think it's best if they don't do that.'*

*Thud!*

"Or do you want to go swimming in the oasis? Do you want to celebrate your friendship with your loved ones under the sunset?" the desert elf asked.

"…" "The city of dreams! The city of fantasy! A city overflowing with entertainment! Welcome to the desert city, Laves!" the desert elf exclaimed.

"Wow!!!"

*Clap, clap, clap, clap!*

"This is great!"

*'But the reactions are varied… '*

Park Deok-Gu was already drinking beer with Choi Young-Ki.

*'There are people into this kind of thing.'*

Sun Hee-Young and Elena looked like they were clapping out of courtesy, and it was the same thing with Lee Chang-Ryeol and Park Lian.

*'I knew they were going to react that way.'*

Hwang Jung-Yeon seemed to be enjoying it.

Yoo Ah-Young and Ahn Ki-Mo were just smiling.

Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan's eyes were sparkling.

"*Wooooow!!!*" Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed while clapping.

*'Our Ha-Yan… '*

Alps holding tightly onto Shiro was also clapping while shouting.

Most importantly…

*'Ye-Ri… '*

Kim Ye-Ri wasn't screaming, but she stared agape at the performance.

*'Yeah, when will she get another chance to see something like this?'*

Kim Ye-Ri was so engrossed that she couldn't worry about what others thought of her.

*'This might work on the children as well.'*

I was sure that Dialuria, Max, Thronus, Cherubim, Dominions, and Seraphim would really like to see this. Of course, Dialugia would like it as well.

"All right! I'll guide you to your rooms! Afterward, enjoy Laves however you want!" the desert elf said.

With that, the show ended.

"I'll notify you of the group activities later. Unpack your bags first and enjoy your time here. Mr. Ki-Young, I need to go prepare…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"*Ah*, go ahead," I said.

Since there were so many people, I was sure there was a limit to the things we could do as a group. Kim Hyun-Sung had to have realized that as well, as he made time for group activities.

After the announcement, a few people split up from the group. Cha Hee-Ra and Park Deok-Gu were already running toward the tavern, while Sun Hee-Young and Elena were heading toward the shrine together.

*'What should I do first? Maybe I should start with the business plan… '*

And that was when I saw an unfamiliar figure…

“Miss Jo Hye-Jin!”

“Mr. Elias! You’re here,” Jo Hye-Jin greeted.

*‘What the heck?’*

*'Why is* he *here… Who invited him?'*

“I’m sorry for making you wait,” Elias said.

“It’s fine. I just got here—”

“Have you eaten yet?” Elias interrupted her.

“No…”

I saw an elf scoundrel having fun talking to Jo Hye-Jin.

“Oppa…” Jung Ha-Yan muttered.

“…”

“Who invited that scoundrel?” I questioned.

# CHAPTER 1042
# PICNIC (5)

[Title: I Think Things Are Going Well with the Elf Gentleman. But… I Don't Feel Comfortable. (Comments: 1,271)]

[Posted By: I Like Blue]

[I'm sorry for suddenly making a post like this. Like always, I have no one to complain to, so I'm writing another post. I don't know if you remember, but I'm the same person who made the post about how an elf gentleman had confessed to me.

[I can't tell you the details… but I couldn't accept his feelings. I didn't like him… and as all of you are already aware, the world was in chaos because the continent turned into a dungeon…

[To be honest, I thought everything was over after that incident. Meeting him was kind of uncomfortable, and I thought he and I had forgotten about everything and had gone back to being friends.

[However… that wasn't the end of it. After a while since that incident, he wouldn't stop telling me to be with him. I'd decline him with a smile and sometimes with a stern attitude, but despite that, he continued…

[My opinion about him had changed when we went on an expedition together. He stopped the monsters alone for the expedition group, and I was heartbroken when he returned with injuries all over him.

[I knew he had always been a righteous person, but seeing him in bed made my heart waver a little.

[The problem is that there's no way for me to figure out whether I have

feelings for him or not. I'm not sure if I had sympathized with him back then or if it was something else.

[He suggested that we get to know each other, so we sometimes drink tea or have a meal together, but I'm really confused about… whether *this* is right or not. He didn't suddenly confess his feelings to me like back then.

[He looks like he's willing to wait until I'm certain of my feelings… but is it okay to maintain this awkward relationship when I'm still feeling uncertain about all this? I just feel bad for him. What would you do if you were me?]

[Unknown ID: She's back. She's still alive. *Hehehehehe.*]

[Lindel Villager: Seriously, stop it. I've read the posts this person made, and they're really too much. It must be a hobby of yours to make fake posts and see people react to them. Please live in the present.]

[Wooden Spoon: They must be having fun seeing so many comments. At least they succeeded in grabbing people's attention.]

[I Like Blue: I wish this was a fake post. Really. I'm not lying. Right now…]

[Unknown ID: Here's a *Not Recommended* for me. *Hehehehe*. Also, please stop. Looks like you came here after reading a strange novel. Just stop denying reality and accept it. This is where you live now, and if you keep filling your head with strange thoughts, you'll become mentally ill. *Hehehe.*]

[I Like Blue: It's really not fake. I'm being serious.]

[Meeeee: *Ah!* You're the one who made that post last time! I'm not sure if you remember, but I left a comment saying I was dating an elf…

[As expected, you're still in that awkward relationship. Whatever it is, the most important thing is how you feel. I know this is sudden, but after I made that comment, we decided to get married and move to Elf the Hill…]

[Elf Love Forever: Elf the Hill! Welcome! I'm sure we'll meet each other

someday!]

[Meeeee: *Ah!* If we pass each other, clap your hands!]

[World Tree 42: *Ooh*, I was really excited to move there as well.]

[Meeeee: I'm meeting all the residents here today. *Hehehehe*]

[I Like Blue: I heard he also owns a few units on Elf the Hill. It must be really famous.]

[World Tree 42: ?]

[Unknown ID: Don't leave any comments under this person's posts. *I Like Blue* is the main villain of this forum. Can you stop lying? Now you're saying that elf gentleman owns a few units on Elf the Hill. Do you even know how expensive that place is? That place is second only to Lindel. It's popular among influential people, man.

[I Like Blue: Please stop talking like that. I'm not lying… and I'm not obsessed with baiting people.]

[Nature Lover: Reported for inappropriate post. ^^;;]

*'Why did she make this post?'*

It wasn't helpful at all.

"Oppa, did you check?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Yeah, there is a post, but the topic changed, and they're just talking about Elf the Hill now," I answered.

"Why are they suddenly talking about Elf the Hill? It has nothing to do with the topic," Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"I think it's more like they changed the subject while talking about it. That's

all they're talking about. I was wondering why there were so many comments under Hye-Jin's post.

"I think she became an outcast in the forum after that incident… Well, whatever happened, there aren't any comments that can change her mind," I answered.

"But why is Miss Hye-Jin acting like that again? What kind of strange things did that scoundrel say to her?" Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

There was a chance that the elf scoundrel had said something strange to her. I had no idea what he said for her to make that post, but that old elf could be pretty cunning at times.

I used my hand mirror and saw that it was the only recent post. We weren't *so* busy that she couldn't make any posts on the forum. It looked like she had spent a lot of time with him without my knowledge.

"He hasn't been confessing to her recently. I'm not sure if his habitual confession syndrome was cured, but she has been rejecting him, so it's only natural for him to be more cautious.

"He's probably looking for a good opportunity to confess to her. I think they've been getting along well recently, and since they've been spending a lot of time together, he probably thinks that he finally has a chance.

"The incident at the sanctuary was truly a significant moment…" Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"…"

"…"

"And you think this is it?" I asked.

"How can it not be? Imagine being in an oasis and talking under the night sky where meteors can be seen. I'm sure this place is going to be popular with

couples. I looked around and saw many romantic spots. There're so many nice places that I can't even pick among them," Lee Ji-Hye answered.

"Looks like he's prepared this time. Anyway, the desert elves are here, and it's possible that they fed Elias some information. Even if Hye-Jin isn't interested in Elias, if the atmosphere is nice enough, there can be an unexpected result…" I commented.

"So you're saying that we need to stop them, right?" she asked.

"…"

I would never let her date that old elf. Not on my watch. It was my duty as her friend to make sure that she wouldn't end up making bad decisions.

The problem was that I already had plans. Jung Ha-Yan seemed anxious while standing not too far from me.

Han Sora whispered to her, "Try telling him."

Jung Ha-Yan nodded and waited patiently for the end of my conversation with Lee Ji-Hye.

*'It's been a while since Ha-Yan and I spent time together.'*

Especially in a place like this…

Jung Ha-Yan would end up exploding at this rate, but it was fine because Han Sora was here—no, I wanted to spend time with Ha-Yan as well.

The Jo Hye-Jin and Elias situation was important, but I would be too bothered to leave Ha-Yan alone on the first day of our trip.

"I'll follow them for now. You should spend some time with Miss Ha-Yan… or how about a double date?" Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

"That's if Ha-Yan…"

*'If Ha-Yan wants to go on a double date… Do you really think she'll hang out with someone else during the first day of our outing?'*

"…"

"…"

"I-I-I like it. H-H-He said a double date, Sora. A double date," Jung Ha-Yan said.

*'She actually likes it.'*

I just brought it up. I was surprised that she'd like it…

"Really? Is that really okay?" I asked.

"Yes, oppa. I-I like double dates. I mean, I-I-I really want to go on a double date," she answered.

I wasn't sure if it was because I asked her out on a date first or if she really liked double dates, but it was highly likely that it was the latter. I could tell from Jung Ha-Yan's face.

She just wanted to go on a double date. It wasn't like she enjoyed spending time with other couples.

She probably wanted to do everything that other couples would do. It could be included in the list of things she wanted to do with me, or she could have gotten the idea from one of the things that ordinary couples would do back on Earth…

*'Not bad.'*

"Then… Miss Jung Ha-Yan, I'm going to go take care of a few things. Call me if something happens… The things you'll need are in your bag. Here's your makeup… and I added a bit of gold…" Han Sora informed her.

“O-OKay. Where will you be, Sora?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“What?” Han Sora asked.

“Where are you going to be?” Jung Ha-Yan repeated.

“I’ll be nearby, so contact me if something happens,” Han Sora answered.

Jung Ha-Yan smiled brightly. She had to be really happy because she kept touching her clothes and her cheeks. She even jumped up and down.

Meanwhile, Han Sora, who had just missed her chance to be alone for the first time in a while, looked sad, but it was clear that she wasn't that sad.

It appeared like Han Sora wanted to feel needed by Jung Ha-Yan.

I felt like it was Han Sora who had Stockholm Syndrome rather than me…

“Shall we go?” I suggested.

“Okay, o-oppa!”

Lee Ji-Hye headed straight to the monitoring room, and we left Han Sora by herself.

I actually thought that this was better.

*‘It’s our first time, after all.’*

The city was too big for us to explore every nook and cranny of it. We also had no idea where everything was or what we ought to do. If we followed Elias and Jo Hye-Jin, we'd be following the exact course that the desert elves had suggested to Elias.

*‘I’m sure she’ll like it.’*

Elias was supposedly the embodiment of romance.

“Y-You’re really sexy today… Oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan complimented me.

“Really? Maybe it’s because I’m not wearing my usual clothes. I feel great, but I haven’t gotten used to them yet, so I'm worried. *Ah*, you’re really pretty too, Ha-Yan,” I said.

“R-Really?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“Of course. You’re pretty no matter what you wear. I didn’t think the traditional clothes here would end up looking good on you,” I answered.

“I-I think I can dance like those desert elves from earlier. Like this,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

*‘The Dance of Enchantment again?’*

Jung Ha-Yan danced seductively in the middle of the street. I had no idea who taught her, but I couldn’t stop smiling at the sight. Jung Ha-Yan had to be happy as well because she was smiling while jumping up and down.

Our destination was a brunch cafe. I wanted to experience something new rather than go to a restaurant I often visited in Lindel.

As soon as we entered, I saw two people sitting at a table.

“Sub guild master?”

“Miss Hye-Jin?” I greeted.

“H-How did you…”

“I came here to eat with Ha-Yan. *Ah!* You’re here as well, Mr. Elias,” I greeted.

“It’s been a while, Father Lee Ki-Young,” Elias greeted.

“What a coincidence. How about we spend the day together?” I suggested.

“Sir, w-what are you…”

“I-I-It’s a double date. A double date, Miss Jo Hye-Jin. Let’s go on a double date,” Jung Ha-Yan chimed in.

Jung Ha-Yan sat down as if she needed no permission and—

“Oh wow, so this is where all of you guys were. Since we’re all here, how about we join you as well, Miss Hye-Jin?”

“Who’s… *Huh*? Miss Ji-Hye?” Jo Hye-Jin said.

Lee Ji-Hye entered the restaurant while holding Han Sora’s hand.

“It must be fate that gathered us all here, don’t you think so?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“…” “…”

*‘Why… did she come here? I thought she was going to watch from afar.’*

“We traveled all the way here. It’s a fun day… so let’s have fun together,” Lee Ji-Hye added.

“…”

*'Why on earth did you bring Han Sora here?'*

“*Huh?*”

*'Where is Ha Yeon-Soo?'*

# CHAPTER 1043
# PICNIC (6)

*'It was better when it was just us.'*

Wasn't it too obvious for us to meet just like this?

It was also clear that Lee Ji-Hye had come here to interrupt them.

*'Look at her gritting her teeth.'*

I was curious as to why she had come all the way here, but I knew she had something in mind when I saw her pout.

She was in the monitoring room earlier, so I believed Elias had said something that struck a nerve before Ha-Yan and I made it here. I had no idea why she even bothered bringing Han Sora here… Actually, there wasn't any reason for her to bring Han Sora here, so perhaps…

*'She just brought her with her because she was around.'*

It was highly likely that she simply dragged Han Sora, who was following Jung Ha-Yan, here. The problem was it *had* to be Han Sora.

When Lee Ji-Hye and Han Sora walked in here, I saw Jung Ha-Yan biting her lips. Her hands were shaking, and she looked as if she had been betrayed.

Jung Ha-Yan looked at Han Sora as if she was asking the latter how she could do something like this to her. Jung Ha-Yan looked as if she were going to cry any time soon and break the table before us.

Han Sora looked anxious as if she had just committed a crime.

I was sure she was worried that the Park Mijin incident that happened a long

time ago was going to happen again. To the public, Han Sora looked as if she had no friends except for Jung Ha-Yan.

They only had each other, and it was implicitly forbidden for them to go out with other friends and spend time with them.

Han Sora had clearly told Jung Ha-Yan that she'd be nearby, but she suddenly came in here with Lee Ji-Hye, so I was sure Jung Ha-Yan was disappointed.

“M-Miss Jung Ha-Yan, I can explain,” Han Sora said.

“…”

“I’ll. Explain everything. M-Miss Jung Ha-Yan. So…” Han Sora stammered.

“L-Let go of me… *Eek!* Let go…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan, please hear me out,” Han Sora begged.

Meanwhile…

“Miss Ji-Hye? Why… are you…”

“I was hanging out nearby with Miss Sora. We were actually shopping when we saw you and Father Lee Ki-Young. It seemed like you were together… so I decided to join you, despite knowing that it’s going to be rude. It’s okay if I join you, right?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“What? Well, I…”

“I didn't interrupt your good time, right? Mr. Elias? I feel bad now,” Lee Ji-Hye added.

*‘She doesn’t look like she feels bad at all.’*

It wasn’t my place to say this, but Lee Ji-Hye was the very definition of "shameless." It was clear that she was acting like someone incapable of

reading the room. Lee Ji-Hye had to be aware of that fact, but she couldn't care less and pressed on.

"*Ah*… sure. It's fine, Miss Lee Ji-Hye," Elias answered.

Why?

*'Because Elias will never be able to say no.'*

It wouldn't make sense for him to say no here.

I was sure Elias was aware that Lee Ji-Hye, Jo Hye-Jin, and I were close.

Since he had spent a lot of time with our Hye-Jin, the latter had to have talked about us once or twice. Hye-Jin had to have told him that I was her closest friend as well, while Lee Ji-Hye was her second closest friend.

Regardless of the topic of their conversation and where they were located, Jo Hye-Jin would most likely talk about the people around her.

Anyway, it was common sense to try to impress your crush's friends.

It was reasonable to accept Lee Ji-Hye and me rather than get rid of us because today was his one and only chance to make a big move.

More importantly, we had never really been able to meet personally these days, so Elias had to have thought that this was the perfect chance to do so. During our last meeting, he tried really hard to earn some brownie points, so I was sure he'd do the same again.

Jo Hye-Jin finally said, "Mr. Elias and I… aren't a couple yet. More importantly, don't you think it's rude to Mr. Elias… to just show up like this?"

"Oh my. Miss Sora and I aren't close either, so that's why I'm suggesting we hang out. And Mr. Elias said that he's fine with it. Isn't that right, Mr. Elias?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“I’m fine, but the sub guild master…”

Of course, I had to show a positive attitude.

“I think it’ll be great as well. It’s been a while since we spent time like this… so Miss Ji-Hye and Miss Sora should join us as well,” I suggested.

“How can we say no to the sub guild master of the Blue Guild? I know it’s rude, but we’ll take a seat. Sit here, Miss Sora,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“*Huh?* Okay, one second…” Han Sora said.

*‘I’m sure she never dreamed that something like this would end up happening to her one morning.’*

“What’s good here? *Oh*, isn’t this your favorite, Miss Ji-Hye?” Han Sora asked.

“What?”

“Why are you eating something else? Let’s share,” Han Sora suggested.

“*Ah*… sure.”

*‘I also never dreamed that something like this would end up happening one morning.’*

“W-What are you going to eat, Oppa?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“What do you want to eat, Ha-Yan?” I asked.

“I-I-I’m fine with anything a-a-as long as it’s not a lunchbox made by the traitor,” Jung Ha-Yan replied.

*‘I never dreamt that things would turn out like this, damn it.’*

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan… I…”

Han Sora moved her chair toward Jung Ha-Yan, and Lee Ji-Hye moved closer

to Jo Hye-Jin. The word "chaos" was not enough to describe the ongoing crisis at the table.

*'I should fix this.'*

"Miss Sora must've wanted to hang out with you seeing that she brought Miss Ji-Hye here, Ha-Yan," I said.

"What? S-Sora did?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"H-He's right, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. I was just worried about you," Han Sora chimed in.

"R-R-Really?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"I'm not that close to Miss Lee Ji-Hye… and we never met in private. It was a lie when she said we went shopping. I promised… to go shopping with you… so there's no way I'd forget, right?" Han Sora added.

"*Ah*… I-I see…"

"Also… you're my only friend, Miss Jung Ha-Yan," Han Sora said.

*'You have many connections. I saw how popular you were at the social gathering.'*

"I don't even have enough time to hang out with you, Miss Jung Ha-Yan…" Han Sora remarked.

"R-Right? I knew you wouldn't betray me, Sora…" Jung Ha-Yan said.

Han Sora had successfully made Jung Ha-Yan feel happy, and I felt good to see them chat happily among themselves.

"Try this too, Miss Jung Ha-Yan," Han Sora said.

"Okay… O-Oppa, have some of this as well. I-I'll give you some as well, Sora,"

Jung Ha-Yan offered.

“Really?” Han Sora asked.

“Yeah.”

*‘Ha-Yan looks really happy.’*

Her mouth was full of food, but she was smiling nonstop.

“O-O-Oppa, wouldn’t it be nice if we lived like this even after marriage?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“You’re right,” I replied.

“S-S-Sora can live in the room next to us,” Jung Ha-Yan suggested.

*‘She suggested the house next to us not too long ago, and now she’s suggesting the room next to ours. At this rate, she might let her live in our bedroom.’*

“I would love that since you’ll need someone to look after Sera,” Han Sora said.

“*Ah!* R-Right. There's also Sera. Oppa, Sera will come here tomorrow, right?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“Yeah. He’ll probably come here with Dialugia… Come to think of it, it’s been a while since I saw Sera…” I answered.

“*Oh*, r-right! Y-You haven’t seen Sera in a while. O-Our Sera has been working hard these days. H-He’s also been doing well in his studies,” Jung Ha-Yan informed me.

“Really?”

“Yes. H-He wasn’t a dummy, after all. I-I’m glad,” she said.

*‘Is she complimenting him or insulting him?’*

“Sera really enjoyed… visiting Laios with you. I hope we can go there together again,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“We can always go again now that we have more time. We’re going to go on a trip again when the kids arrive tomorrow,” I told her.

"*Hehe.* I really wish that every day is like today,” Jung Ha-Yan added.

Today wasn't *that* special, but my heart trembled when I saw her excitement. Eating breakfast together, talking about the past and the things we need to do moving forward, worrying about the future, laughing together, and having fun together were so normal that I was surprised to hear her say that.

*‘Have we been too busy these days? I feel like we've only been looking forward.’*

Jung Ha-Yan had been waiting for moments like this since she was on Earth, so I was sure that moments like those were meaningful to her. Even in my eyes, we looked pretty close to being the ideal family.

*‘Compared to us, it’s hell over there.’*

Our tables were together, but the atmosphere between the two sides was completely different. It was like they were holding an interview.

I heard a voice as cold as ice, and it was coming from Lee Ji-Hye. “I've heard about you from Miss Hye-Jin, Mr. Elias. She said you’re a pure, upright, and strong man."

“*Ah*, really?” Elias asked.

“Yes.”

“I don’t really know what kind of person you are, Mr. Elias… but I heard that you two meet from time to time. I also heard that you’ve been… really trying to woo over our Hye-Jin…” she added.

“*Haha… ha…”* Elias laughed.

“As Miss Hye-Jin’s best friend, I’m worried about many things. I know you’re really famous, and everyone on the continent basically knows you, but as you know, our Hye-Jin is a bit…” Lee Ji-Hye paused.

“Miss Ji-Hye… you can… stop now…” Jo Hye-Jin mumbled.

“I don't really mind it if you aren't planning on dating her seriously, but I discovered that she could end up being the Queen of the Elf Kingdom. And I’m not trying to be racist here or anything, but there's a huge difference between elves and humans.

"The main problem is her lifespan; your lifestyles are very different as well. Were you aware of those differences… and had you actually thought about them before wooing her?” Lee Ji-Hye questioned him.

*‘You’re taking this too far, noona. Calm down. You shouldn’t be acting like that right away.’*

“If you’re really trying to win her heart and have a future with her, don’t you have a lot to think about? Of course, you two *do* look good together…” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“…”

“Also, I’m sorry for bringing this up, but your age gap—”

“Please stop, Miss Hye-Jin,” Jo Hye-Jin said, raising her voice.

*‘I told you. You were taking it too far. If you keep acting like that, she’ll end up getting angry.’*

“Don’t you think you’re being too harsh, Miss Ji-Hye? *Whoo*… I’m sorry, Mr. Elias. I’ll apologize in her place…” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“I-It’s fine, Miss Hye-Jin,” Elias said.

And that was when Lee Ji-Hye started crying…

*'Crocodile tears.'*

"*Uh…* Miss Ji-Hye…?" Jo Hye-Jin said.

"I-I… was just— *Heuk!*" Lee Ji-Hye sobbed.

"I'm sorry, Miss Ji-Hye…" Jo Hye-Jin said.

She was doing all that just so Jo Hye-Jin would see her tears.

"Are you okay? Was I too harsh?" Jo Hye-Jin asked cautiously.

"I was just… worried about you… Miss Hye-Jin… *Heuk*… T-That's all…" Lee Ji-Hye stammered and sobbed.

The turn of events was so fast that I couldn't help but wonder whether someone could truly change attitudes at such speed.

Meanwhile, Elias sensed the strange atmosphere and gulped a mouthful of his own saliva.

# CHAPTER 1044
# PICNIC (7)

Unless Elias was an idiot, he'd definitely know that he wasn't welcome here.

Instead of looking serious, he looked worried. I was sure he knew why I joined with the excuse of calling this a double date and why Lee Ji-Hye suddenly came here. He had to have realized that the people who appeared here as Jo Hye-Jin's friends were trying to interrupt their time together.

*'It came out of nowhere.'*

Ji-Hye noona was too aggressive, so there was no way he wouldn't notice that.

We left the restaurant and sat on a carriage that would take us on a tour all over Laves, but Jo Hye-Jin was still busy comforting Lee Ji-Hye.

Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan was actually enjoying the trip.

"Laves!"

"Laves! Look to your right, everyone! What you're seeing now is a statue of Father Lee Ki-Young, the pride of Laves! I'm sure you already saw it when you arrived, but looking at it up close… isn't it really detailed?" the guide asked.

"…"

"It can't be compared to the statue at the Temple of Sacrifice and Revival, which was made with blood, sweat, and tears… our dwarf craftsmen have also put a lot of work into creating this statue!

"Thanks to this statue, Laves became the third city to own a statue of Father

Lee Ki-Young!" the guide added.

"W-Where are the remaining two statues?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"One is in Laios, while the last one is in the temple in Lindel. In addition to those statues, I'm sure there are other statues in many cities, but the third statue to be officially certified is located here in Laves! All right! Did you all get a good look at the Laves Temple?" they asked.

"Yes!"

"What did you think of the temple?" they asked.

"I-I-It was pretty! It's holy… and I-I like Oppa's statue the most," Jung Ha-Yan answered.

"For those who were disappointed, we'll give you souvenirs for free! It's a wooden statue of Father Lee Ki-Young!" the guide announced.

"R-Really?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Yes, of course! I am happy because you *are* happy! Now, let's go to the next location! We're going to Laves Desert Rock, which was originally very famous in Laves! Since ancient times, the desert rock has been a resting place for wanderers.

"Hizkan, the hero of the Laves Desert, has apparently defeated countless monsters living in this rock!" Mesili, the guide, explained.

"*Woooow!*"

*'Tour buses are the way to go.'*

We could visit all the famous sites thanks to the buses.

The temple was excessively fancy. It was built so that they could worship other gods as well, not just Benigoa, so the space was evenly divided. Of

course, the local god of the wanderers had its place in the temple as well, but the real attraction was here.

*'It's a new scenery, so of course it all feels new.'*

The interior was decorated with many colors and ornate patterns. Since the desert landscape was fancier than I thought, there were many things to see even while we were headed to the Laves Desert Rock.

Actually, we had to get on the carriage that would take us there first.

*'It gives off a good vibe.'*

Basils were a species of large lizards, and it was famous in the Laves Desert. The carriage was being pulled by a lizard instead of a horse or a griffon, so it was a special experience.

"*Wow!* It's so fast! S-S-Sora, Oppa, it's really fast," Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed.

"You're right, and the lizard looks cute…" Han Sora agreed.

"The basils of the Laves Desert were used frequently as a means of transportation by the wanderers in ancient times! The special muscle in the soles of their feet helps them move fast through the desert. When on sand…"

"What?"

"If you want to find out more, I recommend visiting the Laves Desert Monster Museum. The entrance fee is just one gold! From extinct monsters to the plants and animals that are a part of the Laves Desert's ecosystem… everything can be seen there.

"The Ruler of the Laves Desert. Its title alone is enough to make everyone tremble, but the desert worm—has also been restored and displayed there. Its body is four kilometers long!" Mesili said.

"*Wooow!* Four kilometers long?!" Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed.

*‘That guide is pretty good at her job.’*

However, I was heartbroken when I noticed her gaze lingering on the excited Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora. She was trying her best to avoid looking at the other side of the bus because Lee Ji-Hye, Jo Hye-Jin, and Elias were sitting there.

“*Heuk… heuuuk…*”

“I was too harsh, Miss Ji-Hye. Please don’t cry,” Jo Hye-Jin begged.

“No, I’m… okay now… I’m okay, Miss Hye-Jin. I feel like… I shouldn’t have interfered… and… I feel really bad… for staying here…” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“It’s okay. I wasn’t angry… I just wasn’t able to understand your feelings, Miss Ji-Hye. It’s just…” Jo Hye-Jin paused.

“I-I’m leaving now,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

*‘You’re leaving in a moving carriage?’*

“I feel like I’m getting in the way…” Lee Ji-Hye said.

*‘You’ve already gotten in her way… ’*

“I’m… too ashamed to see you…” Lee Ji-Hye added.

*‘You don’t seem ashamed at all.’*

I could confidently say that she had ruined their date, and Jo Hye-Jin was definitely thinking of Elias as an uninvited guest at this point.

Elias was being treated as an outsider, as Jo Hye-Ji was busy comforting the emotional Lee Ji-Hye.

Meanwhile, Han Sora was enjoying the trip with Jung Ha-Yan.

The poor elf had no idea what to say nor when to speak, so he had no choice

but to sit quietly and wait for the right time to speak. He couldn't even glance at the beautiful scenery because his anxious eyes were focused on Jo Hye-Jin and Lee Ji-Hye.

“This is the famous Laves Rock! Now, let’s take a short break here,” Mesili suggested.

“Okay!”

“Excuse me… Miss Ji-Hye…” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“I’ll just… head back now,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“No, Miss Ji-Hye. Let’s talk for a moment…” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“There’s a resting place for wanderers on Desert Rock! It’s being used by other wanderers as well, so please don’t forget about the rules I explained earlier!” Mesili reminded us.

“Okay! L-Let’s go, oppa!” Jung Ha-Yan said excitedly.

“Okay.”

“H-H-Hurry, Sora. Th-There are real desert elves over there. Real ones!” Jung Ha-Yan shouted.

*‘The guides are real desert elves, you know that, right?’*

I couldn't really imagine what a "wanderer" would look like, but they looked exactly as I would expect from the word "wanderer." The wanderers gathered under the Desert Rock were exactly what I had imagined—outfit and behavior-wise.

They had set up a large tent under the rock, which helped them cool off the desert heat, and in addition to the wanderers, lizardmen, desert elves, and members of other races were there as well. They didn’t seem wary to see newcomers, and they actually made room for us.

I was sure it was a rule here. It was a shelter that allowed entry to basically anyone.

“Hello, Father Lee Ki-Young,” they greeted me.

“*Ah*, you know me?” I asked.

“How could I, a wanderer of the continent, not know you, Father Lee Ki-Young?” the wanderer asked.

“Thank you for your hospitality, Chief,” I said.

“I don’t know about hospitality, but this place is open to everyone… and you saved this desolate desert. I don’t know how else I can thank you. If you don’t mind, I’d like to guide you to our shelter,” said the chief.

“Yes, of course,” I answered.

“C-Can I sit here, Chief?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

It was a new experience, and we were meeting new people as well, which was the fun part of traveling. There were many things to talk about as well.

There was a saying that old lizardmen were wise, so it was easy to communicate with them, and it seemed that saying was correct.

While we were deep into our conversation, Lee Ji-Hye’s plan to ruin their date had to have worked because their emotions had returned to normal. Elias aside, it was an undeniable fact that their words were interesting.

There were many wanderers who wanted to stop wandering, and the birth of Laves allowed many wanderers to settle down here. The old lizardman and the others were telling me that this kind of life was more comfortable for them.

What I found kind of strange was Elias’ date. Of course, I was not saying that it was bad, but spending time with the wanderers didn’t seem romantic at

all.

The people danced with the dancers and talked about their lives while drinking wine. They talked about meaningless things while looking up at the sky, and then they watched the lizardmen fight each other using only their tails.

Once the events were done, everyone said goodbye to each other and greeted those who had arrived at Laves Rock. They would then share their experience with the newcomers.

It wasn't really my type, but this was a vacation and a trip, so I felt great. I actually enjoyed it. The chair they were using felt comfortable to me, and their snacks were delicious as well. Ji-Hye noona seemed a bit skeptical as well, but Jo Hye-Jin seemed to be enjoying all this.

*'It's not enough to make an impact.'*

Friendships were created in settings like this rather than love. First of all, there were too many characters, and there were too many wanderers here, so the couple wasn't able to spend any time together.

And that was when I realized what the sly Elias was up to. I wasn't sure whether this was a coincidence or not, but I saw a couple who managed to break the awkwardness between races.

"…"

"…"

The couple was a male human and a female member of the Lizardmen Tribe.

"Father Lee Ki-Young," the man greeted.

"It's nice to meet you, but…" I paused.

"*Hahaha*. I somehow ended up with a lizardwoman. I was actually

summoned here as an adventurer as well, but I was treated well during my time here. I got tricked and sold a fake Laves Desert treasure map, but the Lizardmen Tribe discovered me just as I was dying," the man explained.

"…"

"I ended up spending time with them, and in the end, I decided to stay with my other half. I have been living here since then. *Hahaha*… I actually consider myself lucky. I heard you were coming, but I never imagined I'd meet you in person…" he said.

"…"

"I get those questions a lot. I'd be lying if I said that there were no differences… between our races. Our life, culture, and everything is different. There are usually a lot of differences even when you meet the opposite sex from another country, but we're from two different races.

"It was difficult at first, but we eventually started understanding each other. Maybe this is just the way I'm built," the man continued.

"…"

"Some minority races forbid meeting other races, but most of the wanderers are in a similar situation as me. Of course, it's rare to find a human living their life as a wanderer," he added.

"I see," I said.

"There are many other races in our tribe besides me, and I'm sure the situation is similar for the other races. Of course, it could also be because of the rumors circulating among the wanderers," he informed.

"Such as…" I asked.

"Understanding, helping, and loving each other. These are the words of the Desert God," he answered.

"…"

"*Ah*, if you're wondering whether I miss my old life or not, I honestly… do miss it, but that doesn't matter to me anymore. As long as I can be with the one I truly love… things like that are really trivial issues," he said.

Of course, if he couldn't love at this point, then he'd end up in America in less than a month. Given the harsh environment, I could see why he would tell me that, and that was probably why that saying was spreading like some kind of trend. However…

*'Seeing his expression, I don't think this was his intention.'*

Elias looked kind of touched. Had he regained the emotions he felt when he sat by a campfire and shared a heartfelt conversation with someone? He was trying to read the room, and finally—exactly six hours and thirty minutes later…

"I also…"

"Mr. Elias?"

"I think I can also abandon everything… for the person I love," Elias said.

"…" "I can abandon everything I have," Elias said.

They weren't just empty words.

"It wouldn't be just me taking them to Everia…" he paused.

"…"

"I think I can share and accept the things they consider precious… while staying at an unfamiliar place," Elias continued.

He looked sincere.

*‘Stop looking so sincere, man.’*

“I don’t need anything else,” Elias added.

*'Stop looking so embarrassed, Jo Hye-Jin. Don’t assume that he’s talking about you.'*

# CHAPTER 1045
# PICNIC (8)

The sun was setting, and our dying emotions were starting to burn along with the blazing fire.

Why was Jo Hye-Jin blushing? Was it because of the fire or the sunset?

It was unlike her to act so embarrassed, but the sight did not necessarily mean that she was falling in love with the old elf.

Even if she wasn’t interested in him, there wasn't a person alive who wouldn’t be embarrassed after hearing Elias' words.

He was decent in the looks department as well, so his words had to have sounded even sweeter in Jo Hye-Jin's ears.

“*Um…*”

Perhaps even the crackling noises from the bonfire sounded romantic, as Jo Hye-Jin was staring speechlessly at the bonfire.

I felt uneasy because I had no idea what Elias was looking at, but he was preparing to say his next words. His next words were from his heart, not something he had prepared in advance. His eyes were filled with determination, and his every word was genuine.

“I don’t care where we end up as long as we’re together,” Elias said.

“…”

“I’ll do my best to become an understanding person rather than trying to make the other person understand,” he added.

"…"

*'He's counting his chickens before they hatch.'*

"Even if my choice causes me to lose everything, I think I'll be happier than before I made that decision," he said.

*'So you're just going to abandon the Union of Others and the Elf Kingdom to settle down in Lindel?'*

*'You think Hye-Jin will like that?'*

Jo Hye-Jin was such an upright individual that there was no way she would let Elias do something like that.

However, it seemed that Elias' Habitual Confession Syndrome had returned, as I was sure he had no intentions of confessing to her. His words just now were just an expression of his feelings, and it was like he was admitting that he had only been thinking about himself so far.

In Jo Hye-Jin's eyes, that was the biggest issue in dating Elias.

*'She'll end up being the Queen of the Everia Kingdom.'*

However, Jo Hye-Jin had her own career, a position within the Blue Guild, and a bright future, so I couldn't imagine her suddenly going over to the Everia Kingdom to become its queen.

In addition, she'd have to live with other races with a lifespan of thousands of years. If she were to date Elias, she'd have to give up on many things. If they started dating, the continent would focus on them, and she'd have to distance herself from Lindel.

I was sure those two had yet to discuss such issues.

They weren't exactly at the stage where they could discuss those things, but if they ended up dating, it was highly likely that they wouldn't even think

about those issues at all.

However, they were realistic issues that they would have to face. Elias seemed to genuinely understand that Hye-Jin was feeling burdened by his approach, but despite that, he remained consistent in his attempts to win her heart over.

“I know that both of you don’t really like me,” Elias said.

“…”

“I realized once again how much of a fool I was… for suddenly appearing before Miss Hye-Jin and not thinking about the circumstances… and how much you’re worried about her as her friend.

"I would like to really apologize to Miss Hye-Jin… first of all. I-I wasn’t considerate at all,” Elias added.

*‘No, that’s not the reason why we dislike you. We just hate you as you are.’*

I couldn’t find the exact reason, but I just hated him.

I hated the fact that he looked like a ladies’ man and that he was old… but most importantly, I disliked the fact that he was trying to take Hye-Jin away from us.

His personality wasn't bad, but I needed to see whether he was willing to do anything and everything for Hye-Jin. I honestly had no idea if he was even willing to go that far. He said he was willing to abandon the Elf Empire and the Union of Other Races, but no one knew whether he was telling the truth or not.

People would always act like they were willing to lay down everything for their partner during the honeymoon phase, but it was common for relationships to go downhill after that, so what if he ended up returning to the Elf Kingdom? Hye-Jin would surely be devastated.

“I think I'm just obsessed with the frustration inside me,” Elias remarked.

*‘Frustration?’*

“I feel like the world is going to collapse if I don’t express my feelings. It feels like my heart will stop if I don't say anything. It feels like my body is rotting… a-and that’s why I'm in a hurry to express my feelings,” Elias continued.

*‘Are you lovesick or something? You’re overexaggerating things now. What are you? The greatest romantic of this era?’*

“Despite knowing how burdensome… and… and… difficult it must’ve been for Miss Hye-Jin… releasing my frustration was a priority. I-I didn’t even think about Miss Hye-Jin’s situation,” Elias explained.

“…”

“I know it sounds ridiculous… but… but it just means I’m thinking about Miss Hye-Jin that much,” Elias said.

*‘He must be serious… ’*

*I* was blushing, and the wanderers here even looked away.

Elias was a runaway train when it came to love.

It was a one-way confession that was inconsiderate of the people around him. Jung Ha-Yan wasn’t really listening, but Han Sora clearly looked like she wanted to get away from here. I was sure Han Sora embodied the reaction of an ordinary person.

It was such a heartwarming and tear-jerking moment, but the problem was that *I Like Blue’s* heart was wavering in the face of his sincerity.

*‘There are people who like things like that.’*

I was sure she liked his sincere remarks, as she once said, “Don’t tarnish *his*

pride."

"I-I actually wanted to express my feelings today…" Elias said.

"…"

*'You're already doing that.'*

"I don't think I'm ready. I think I'm not good enough… for Miss Hye-Jin…" Elias added.

*'At least he knows that.'*

"At least you know that," Lee Ji-Hye said.

*'Ji-Hye noona, you shouldn't have said that.'*

"Miss Ji-Hye, please stop," Jo Hye-Jin begged.

"…"

"…"

"I'll head back first today. Please enjoy your time," Elias said.

"M-Mr. Elias, wait!" Jo Hye-Jin shouted.

"I really hope I can hear your answer… the next time we meet. For the last time," Elias remarked.

Jo Hye-Jin called out, but he disappeared like the wind. The wanderers, who remained quiet during the awkward situation, were finally able to breathe comfortably.

Jo Hye-Jin stared at Elias' departing figure before walking toward us.

"You two…"

"…"

"I appreciate you worrying and caring about me… but don't you think you were a bit too harsh on him?" Jo Hye-Jin questioned.

*'I did nothing wrong. It's all Ji-Hye noona.'*

"Why are you including me in this?" I asked.

"You're the same, sir. If you hadn't suggested… a double… I mean…" Jo Hye-Jin paused.

"…"

"I'm not a child. I'm not that stupid that I need someone to tell me what I need to do with my love life," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"I-I… was just worried about you… Miss Hye-jin…" Lee Ji-Hye said.

"I have plans as well, Miss Ji-Hye. Mr. Elias sometimes says strange things that catch me off-guard… but he's not a bad person. I can tell what's right and wrong… so please don't overstep your boundaries," Jo Hye-Jin requested.

"But… *heuk…*"

"Even if you cry… I don't know why you're so interested in my love life in the first place… b-but the reason I'm so confused isn't because I've never been in a relationship," she explained.

*'No one said anything about that.'*

"As I said before, I've had many relationships. I'm just… sick of relationships that don't last long. I simply want to be more careful when it comes to a new relationship.

"I want to maintain a healthy relationship with someone I can trust… and not just have a fling. Th-That's why I've been thinking about many things and my

feelings. And today… wasn't exactly a date…" Jo Hye-Jin explained.

"I think… he thought of it as a date, Miss Jo Hye-Jin. Th-Then, how do you feel right now?" Han Sora chimed in. It seemed that the abrupt drama had piqued her curiosity.

"…"

"Do you like Mr. Elias?" she asked.

"…"

"…"

"…"

"I'm not sure," Jo Hye-Jin replied.

*'Nice.'*

"I still don't know how I feel about him. Honestly, Mr. Elias isn't a bad person. He's too good for me… He's an upright… and fragile man. Strictly speaking… h-he's good-looking as well… but looks aren't everything.

"What I'm trying to say is that he's someone that doesn't fit me. I appreciate his kindness… but honestly…" Jo Hye-Jin trailed off.

"…"

"I don't even know my own feelings. There are times when I do like him… Actually, there are times when I think maybe it won't be a bad idea to date him, but I feel like it's rude to accept Mr. Elias' feelings when I'm not even sure about my own feelings…"

"…"

"Mr. Elias is really overestimating me, but all of you already know that. I'm

not… the kind of person Mr. Elias thinks I am…"

*'No, you are the exact person that Elias is thinking of… '*

If she were someone else, Elias wouldn't think much of them.

*'If you believe he's not the one for you after dating him, you can just break up with him. You can also control him and compare him to other people… I'm sure it will be enjoyable at the very least.'*

Meeting new people was fun and stimulating. Ordinary people wouldn't spend days thinking about whether to take his confession seriously or not. They'd simply enjoy the moment.

Elias probably liked that side of Jo Hye-Jin.

It wouldn't be as pure as Elena's soul, but if Elias could look into the souls of people, he'd know how pure Jo Hye-Jin's soul was.

"A-Anyway… this is my problem, not yours. I appreciate your concern and attention… but I ask that… you stop now. Also…" Jo Hye-Jin paused.

"…"

"I won't talk about this issue again. I feel like I'll get even more confused by your words, so I think it's best if we no longer talk about this. As I mentioned earlier, this is my problem, so please… don't interfere," Jo Hye-Jin requested.

A deafening silence descended.

It seemed that Lee Ji-Hye had finally understood Jo Hye-Jin's feelings as well

— She's pretty determined, oppa.

*"I feel the same way, noona. Honestly, I think we cared too much…"*

— Right? Strictly speaking, this is her personal issue, and I think it's a bad

idea to interfere too much. We've been thinking about her as a child so far, but I'm sure she has a plan, and… she will do just fine. Elias has also expressed his true feelings today, so let's just keep an eye on them. I'm sure Hye-Jin will do fine.

*"Yeah, let's just keep an eye on her."*

— Let's do one last test, oppa.

*"Let's do one last test, noona."*

Elias, the last remaining pure-hearted elf on the continent.

I had no choice but to see just how loyal that guy was.

# CHAPTER 1046
# PICNIC (9)

"*Whoo…*"

"Is something wrong, Mr. Elias?" a lizardman asked.

"It's… nothing," I[1] replied.

"You look like you have a lot on your mind… Let me… pour you a drink," he offered.

"Thank you," I said.

A lizardman clad in a suit served me a drink, and then he proceeded to clean the wine glasses displayed on the wall. A desert lizardman as a master of a bar wasn't a typical sight to see, but he was definitely qualified for it with how skilled he was at it.

*'I have too many thoughts… '*

I had too many useless thoughts. Normally, I wouldn't think much about it and would simply look at the various scenery. Perhaps it was because I had just realized that my worldview had been too narrow so far. It was to the point that I couldn't deny it if someone were to call me self-centered.

I'd often hear that from Elena. She'd often say, "You're too narrow-minded when you look at the world. You need to be more open-minded. You need to look at the bigger picture when doing politics. Everia isn't an island, and there needs to be change in the Union of Others."

I was a pretty conservative man, and I'd always been looking at the world with a narrow mind. I thought that was the right thing to do. I was convinced that Elena had to inherit the kingdom, as she was a High Elf, and I couldn't

understand why she had decided to join a group of humans.

Actually, I never really allowed her to step foot into a city full of humans. When the World Tree was under threat, I had no trust in outsiders, and I hadn't been able to accept the major revolutions occurring all over the continent.

Of course, due to both external and internal pressure as well as Elena's persuasion, I agreed to open our doors to the other races. If I were the leader of the Union, however, the Union of Others wouldn't be able to adapt to the new continent.

The door of the Elf Kingdom would remain shut tight, and I wouldn't be able to witness the members of other races wandering the Free City of Lindel. I wouldn't be able to uncover the dark side of the slave industry, and I wouldn't be able to the slaves.

This place was the same…

The Union of Others wouldn't be able to give shelter like this to the other races, as they would have had no way to find support. Laves was a city, but it was a work of art as well. The stabilization of the Laves Desert and the huge oasis was a blessing to its denizens.

"All I can say is thank you… Mr. Elias," the bartender said.

"What?"

"I'm talking about this city. You're the representative of the Union of Others, so if it hadn't been for your decision, this city wouldn't have been built. This place is like a blessing to us…" answered the bartender.

"I… didn't do anything," I mumbled.

"Of course you did. *Haha*. I know how hard you and Miss Elena are working for beings like us. The same goes for the agreement with the Democratic Country…" replied the bartender.

“I’m not the one who made that decision, Master,” I told him.

“…”

“It’s true that we signed a treaty… but I was actually against it. Thinking about it now, it was a really stupid decision. I couldn’t trust humans. They’re selfish, and they think that they’re better than the other races.

"I've always thought of them that way. I didn’t think… that they could change, but I've just realized that I was wrong,” I said.

“What do you think about them now?” asked the bartender.

“I've learned that there are a variety of humans out there. I also realized… that there are more noble souls among them than among us,” I answered.

No other words were needed, and this question actually made me laugh. I had always been a conservative man whose guard was always up around humans, but I ended up loving a human.

*‘Jo Hye-Jin.’*

She was a strong, upright, and a kindhearted woman with a noble soul.

Her soul had an unbreakable belief, just like the World Tree.

She was the reason why my opinion of humans had ended up changing.

At first, I just thought that humans like her truly existed, but her outlook on the world and how she treated the people around her ended up moving my heart.

Jo Hye-Jin captured my heart.

She took a big part of my heart, and I couldn’t do anything about it.

It felt like my heart was going to burst at the mere thought of her.

She had taken a big piece of my heart, and I could not… imagine a day without thinking about her. She was the reason I started looking at humans in a different light.

“You’re right, Mr. Elias. We’re the same… but I believe humans have more variety when it comes to character. The desert elves and us lizardmen would grit our teeth at the thought of humans, but we started questioning whether the humans written in history and the humans now are the same race,” said the bartender.

“…”

“That’s why… I developed a habit of looking after them recently. This habit was actually developed when I was working in the Republic. I think it’s gotten worse… lately,” the bartender added.

“So you’re from the Republic,” I remarked.

“That’s right. It’s pretty rare for a Lizardman. Many feel more uncomfortable around Lizardmen than elves. I operated a small bar in the back alley and saw many interesting people. Since then… it’s become a hobby of mine to observe humans,” explained the bartender.

“…” I nodded because I had the same habit.

It wasn’t exactly the best habit to have, but beings of other races would probably develop it eventually. They'd either observe the humans around them, afraid that the humans would harm them, or develop a habit of judging whether the humans before them were trustworthy or not.

Of course, that was probably not what the lizardman meant.

He was probably just saying that he enjoyed observing humans.

Just as I expected, the Master was looking around while cleaning wine glasses. When I looked around without realizing it, I saw the members of the Red Mercenary Guild drinking in the corner of the room.

*‘They’re pure-hearted people.’*

“This is fun.”

“We need to have music on a good day like this!”

“Have I told you this? During the Laves Desert expedition…”

“Can you bring us more drinks, Master?”

*‘They’re really pure-hearted people.’*

They were people who yearned for strength, and they loved to fight and have fun. They could easily walk the wrong path if they weren't careful, but they weren't the type to enjoy bloodshed. They were people who purely enjoyed fighting, like the green-skinned lizardmen.

I saw a young woman drinking quietly nearby.

“Master, one more drink for me. The alcohol tastes bitter today,” the young woman ordered.

*‘Kim Ye-Ri of the Blue Guild?’*

“This is what life must be like,” the young woman mumbled.

*‘…’*

“*Whoo…* keep the change, Master. It’s your tip,” Kim Ye-Ri said.

“We don’t accept—”

“Just take it. It’s a thank you for serving me good alcohol, *hehe*.” Kim Ye-Ri insisted.

I'd sometimes see someone with a cruel soul, but more often than not, their soul was cruel not because it was cruel in nature. An example of that was Kim Ye-Ri. She had a cruel soul because her soul was in a lot of pain, but I

could see that pain being washed away along with that cruelty.

I could tell that she had a bright and pure-natured soul.

Kim Ye-Ri stood up and exited.

Soon, I heard a loud voice.

“I’m Dialuria. You don’t know who my dad is? Max, says something,” Dialuria said.

“O-Only adults can come in here, noona,” Max stuttered.

“Noonim, let’s hurry and turn back. If Father or Mother finds out that we were—”

“Cheru, how dare you interrupt your older sister… I’m not trying to drink alcohol. I just want to take a look. I can smell… Dad in here… Don’t you guys want to see Dad? He’s here,” Dialuria interrupted Cheru.

“I’m sorry, but… this place is…”

I saw children.

*‘Miss Dialuria?’*

And…

*‘Max and the baby angels.’*

The staff was having a hard time dealing with the children lined up at the entrance. Of course, they were eventually forced to leave.

“Miss Dialuria!”

They were forced to leave by a familiar figure.

“Miss Dialugia is looking for you. You have to hurry back. Max, Cheru, Thro,

Domi, and Sera. You guys need to go back as well. You're not supposed to be here! Stop being so rude!" Elena shouted.

"*Tch…*"

"Hurry!" Elena yelled.

"Run, guys! Let's split up and meet *there* later!" Dialuria instructed.

"But unni! Miss Elena is!" Domi shouted.

"Noonim!" Cheru yelled.

"Run! This is an order! Run! It's an order!" Dialuria shouted.

The children split up and ran away.

The figure that was left alone in the empty space had a face I would often see when I was young.

"Elena?" I said.

"Elias?" Elena muttered.

"…"

"What brings you—"

Just as I was about to greet her…

"*Ah…*"

A radiant light pervaded her figure, and an enormous amount of holy power instantly engulfed her. The color of her hair and eyes changed, and she hovered in mid-air. The next moment, bright dots manifested and spun around her, seemingly mimicking a cluster of stars.

*'Elena?'*

I knew exactly what was happening, so I wasn't surprised at all.

*'Elune… Elune is… '*

I knelt down and prepared myself to greet Elune.

Elune took quiet and sacred steps toward me using Elena's fleshly body, and he spoke with a quiet, warm, and compassionate voice.

[My son.]

"O Elune…" I said.

[My son…]

"…"

[Your other half will appear.]

"What?"

[Your destined partner will appear. Your partner, whom you will love forever and never forget, will appear.]

"…"

[Your destined partner will appear before you. Cherish and love that child. Cherish her because she will bring peace and love to the continent. Live for that child because she'll teach you true love.

[If you don't… If you don't… destruction will come to the continent…]

"Elune…" I mumbled.

[Destruction… will come… to the continent… True destruction… will come… to the continent.]

The light disappeared. Elena fell to the ground, and I caught her in midair.

I looked around without realizing it and…

“Oh no, are you okay?”

And I saw a woman with a captivating smile…

“D-Do you need help? Poor thing…”

“…”

“*Ah…* I’m Lee Ki-Yeon. Nice to meet you, Mr. Elias,” Lee Ki-Yeon greeted.

“How do you know…”

“Is there anyone on the continent who doesn’t know you, Mr. Elias? Anyway… we should look for a place for Miss Elena to rest,” Lee Ki-Yeon suggested.

She had a soul so beautiful and deadly that my heart nearly stopped at the sight of it.

“*Haa…* What are you doing? Can… you please help me… move Miss Elena?” Lee Ki-Yeon asked.

“…”

She had an extremely beautiful and pure-hearted… yet deadly soul.

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1. Elias’ POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1047
# PICNIC (10)

“You’re…”

“I told you just now. I’m Lee Ki-Yeon… or are you asking why I’m here?” Lee Ki-Yeon asked.

“…”

“I’m working,” Lee Ki-Yeon said.

“…”

“At the bar you were just in… Well, I was on my way to work, but I can take today off thanks to you,” Lee Ki-Yeon added.

She seemed used to this. For someone working at a bar, the way she helped Elena looked so natural. It was like she had been treating patients for a long time. Perhaps it was because she noticed my expression, but she spoke as if she was kind of insulted.

"I volunteered as a nurse during the Continental War. There was someone I used to take care of… well… he ended up walking out on his own, but perhaps it’s thanks to his kindness that I still possess holy power.”

“…”

“What? You don’t believe me? Is it because a stranger suddenly appeared… and showed kindness, or is it because I’m a human being?” Lee Ki-Yeon asked me.

“It’s nothing… like that…” I answered.

“I was summoned to this continent. I was once an adventurer, and I once worked as a receptionist at an Adventurer Guild. As I mentioned earlier, I volunteered to be a nurse during the Continental War, and I-I’ve also been a slave.

"Do I need to tell you more? It looks like you want me to tell you everything… including where I’ve been and why I’m here. Will that put your mind at ease? Should I give you more details about myself?” Lee Ki-Yeon asked.

“No, I was being rude. I’m really sorry,” I told her.

“Don’t question your neighbors and love them. You didn’t take Elune’s word to heart—”

“How… did you know about that? I mean, Elune’s words…” I asked.

*‘It can’t be… ’*

“…”

“…”

“This should be enough. Her breathing has finally become stable. It’s all because she accepted a large amount of holy power in one go. Anyway, she’ll recover soon,” Lee Ki-Yeon told me.

“I see, thank you,” I said.

Lee Ki-Yeon got up slowly, and I could finally take a good look at the mysterious woman.

She was wearing the standard outfit of the desert elves, and it was an everyday outfit in Laves wore. The bottom was decorated with fancy and sparkling accessories, and it was cut so high that it showed one of her legs. Her top showed her belly button, and the necklaces around her neck stood out.

The exposed parts of her body were covered with a thin, see-through cloth. Her braided hair was decorated with accessories, and the small gem on her forehead was an accessory that desert elves often used.

The woman who had introduced herself as Lee Ki-Yeon removed the transparent cloth covering the lower part of her face, revealing her entire face to the public.

“I’ll introduce myself again. I’m Lee Ki-Yeon,” she said, introducing herself.

*‘She’s beautiful.’*

I was simply appreciating her beauty and had no other feelings toward her. The feelings I felt were similar to whenever I was looking at an artwork or a natural scenery. It was actually strange, as elves never really considered others beautiful by their appearance.

Elves born with Elune’s blessing were naturally beautiful, so we tend to focus more on inner beauty rather than appearance. I was the same… no, I was sure all elves were like me. Despite that, I thought the mysterious lady was beautiful as soon as I saw her.

*‘It’s strange.’*

It was like I was falling into a swamp, and I was unknowingly falling deeper and deeper into it. Strangely, I was blushing, and my breathing was labored.

Was I being influenced by some magical, alchemical, or curse?

Was it just me, or did she look like a white snake for a second there? Her eyes and lips resembled a snake.

Just then, I saw an indescribable darkness in her black eyes, and it seemed to be sucking everything into it.

“*Ah…*”

The darkness that engulfed everything in an instant pulled both my soul and body into it.

It only lasted for a moment, but it felt like an eternity had passed.

I realized that I was covered in sweat. My hands and feet were shaking. To make matters worse, the bad feeling that had engulfed me was not going away.

*'What the… What the hell is this?'*

There were so many things I couldn't understand. I had no idea what was happening right now. I also had no idea who this woman was, why she had appeared before me, and what our meeting in the Laves Desert meant.

After calming down my confused mind, I turned and saw Elena on the bed.

I finally recalled the incident earlier.

*"Your destined partner will appear before you. Cherish and love that child. Cherish her because she will bring peace and love to the continent. Live for that child because she'll teach you true love. If you don't… If you don't… destruction will come to the continent…"*

It was too strange to call it a coincidence.

Was this woman's appearance right after I heard Elune's prophecy really a coincidence? Was our meeting in this place really a coincidence?

My destined partner, the destruction of the continent… and the woman who'd bring peace and love to the continent. The child who'd teach me true love. There were so many keywords that I couldn't figure out what was happening.

I also wasn't sure whether the prophecy meant what I thought it meant, but… something was happening. Something unknown to me was happening. Something was going to happen to this continent again. To make things

worse…

*'Those are Elune's words.'*

That was all I could think about…

"Master will contact the Blue Guild, and they'll come to get Miss Elena soon…" Lee Ki-Yeon informed me.

"I'll contact them, but do you have a moment?" I asked.

"Excuse me?"

"If you don't mind, could we—"

"This isn't exactly my first time experiencing something like this, so what will you do if I do tell you that I *do* mind?" Lee Ki-Yeon asked.

"…"

"What will you do?" Lee Ki-Yeon asked.

"Well…"

"You're no fun. Can't you take a joke?" Lee Ki-Yeon teased.

"I mean…"

"How come all the people that have asked me out lack a sense of humor? *Geez*…" she mumbled.

"I'm not asking you out on a date," I said.

"*Oh*, this is embarrassing. Looks like I misunderstood. Then…"

"I just… needed a moment of your time. It's to thank you… for your help…" I told her.

“Hey, this was nothing. I was just helping out a person in need. You don’t need to pay me back or anything, and it’s not like I was expecting anything out of it.

"I have no other intentions either, unlike you're suspecting, so feel free to head out. I won’t appear in front of you again, and I will not make any requests, Mr. Elias,” Lee Ki-Yeon reassured me.

“It’s nothing like that,” I said.

“It’s fine. You don’t need to repay me… Don’t think that you’re indebted to me and just consider it me doing a good deed. You don’t need to show me that the stereotype about how elves are stubborn is real,” Lee Ki-Yeon said.

“Wait…”

“I’ll be leaving now. It was fun, Mr. Elias,” she said.

“Th-Then… let’s go on a date,” I suggested.

“What?”

“I don’t mind going on a date… I just want to talk to you,” I told her.

“*Hmm*…”

“What’s… wrong—”

“It’s nothing. Since you put it like that… I have no choice. Shall we get going?” she said.

Lee Ki-Yeon grabbed her bag happily and walked away.

*‘She’s so unpredictable.’*

However, she wasn’t rude, and I could tell that she was trying to be considerate of me.

She seemed to be enjoying even conversations she wasn't really interested in, and she was trying her best to make me feel comfortable. It was possible that she wasn't the type to enjoy jokes and simply disliked an awkward atmosphere.

Honestly, there was no guarantee that this was even her true self.

Although I couldn't confirm it just yet…

*'It's like she's wearing a mask.'*

A mask wasn't exactly bad.

Just like how I disliked showing my true self, it was like she was always hiding her true self. I couldn't feel it all, but I could feel a deep wound inside this woman's soul. It was such a horrible wound that I couldn't quite describe it. However, she wasn't showing it on the outside. I wasn't skilled at reading souls, but I could clearly see her wound.

Despite that, she was acting bright and confident as if she had never experienced that kind of pain before. Yeah… it was as if the world had never hurt her.

"That's how I ended up here. It's like when people want to just run away somewhere. It wasn't hard finding a job. I also had a connection with the Lizardmen Master you met earlier…" Lee Ki-Yeon explained.

"I see, so how…"

"How do you think I met him? I had nothing when I met the Master in the Republic. He was running a bar in a back alley," Lee Ki-Yeon answered.

"…"

"Like everyone else, there were times when it was hard for me… like there were times when I wanted to give up on life. I really lost everything at the time and was left hopeless. I cut off all my past connections, but I regretted

being alone.

"I realized that the person who had already left me could have been my true love. When I was still reeling from the betrayal that was so bad it left both my body and mind severely injured…" Lee Ki-Yeon paused.

"…"

"The Master appeared and offered help. He offered me a place to stay and a job. He accepted me even though I had lost everything. You never know what happens in life. I never imagined that he'd help me and that I would end up going on a date with you, Mr. Elias," Lee Ki-Yeon added.

"…"

"The details aren't fun to hear, and I'm sure you're feeling uncomfortable. You're the prince of Everia as well," Lee Ki-Yeon said.

"It's not uncomfortable at all. As I said before—"

"I know. You just said that out of courtesy… So, what business do you have with me?" Lee Ki-Yeon asked.

"…"

"What do you want to know about me?" Lee Ki-Yeon asked.

"…"

"Why are you so interested in a part-time worker who works at Laves' Small Rock?" Lee Ki-Yeon questioned me.

"That's…"

"…"

What was I supposed to say to her?

I couldn’t tell her that I had received a divine message and that she could be my destined partner as well as the possibility that she might bring destruction to this world.

This situation was absurd, but the divine message was definitely not absurd. I couldn’t imagine Elune lying to me, and it wasn't like advents often happened, but I wanted to deny it.

I knew my behavior was unforgivable, but I was hoping that this wouldn’t go in the direction I was thinking. If the prophecy were true…

*‘Then Miss Hye-Jin… ’*

What would happen to Miss Hye-Jin and me? If this woman and I were destined to be together and that it was an irresistible fate, what choice would I have to make?

“Let’s have another glass,” Lee Ki-Yeon suggested.

I raised my glass carefully and saw a figure staring quietly at me.

“*Uh…*”

I saw Jo Hye-Jin entering the bar quietly, but she immediately ran outside upon seeing me.

“Wait…”

# CHAPTER 1048
# PICNIC (11)

*'Why aren't you going after her?'*

"*Um…*"

Why are you just standing there?

"What's wrong, Mr. Elias?" I[1] asked.

*'Go after her.'*

"It's… nothing…" Elias replied.

*'There's nothing about him that I like.'*

The title "Pure-hearted Man of This Era" was wasted on him.

*'What can you even do? Why are you still here?'*

As expected, I heard a monotonous voice.

— That's a minus five points for me. I don't even know what he can do. He lacks determination. Should I make a guess on what he's thinking right now? There's also that prophecy about the destruction of the continent, but I'm sure that's not the reason why he can't go after her.

— Even if he breaks up with Ki-Yeon today, it doesn't mean that he'll never see her again. She knows all the details, so she might come back tomorrow.

*Ah*, right, right.

— It's all because *he's* the one who asked out Lee Ki-Yeon. He had no choice

but to ask her out, but in the end, he was the one who asked her out.

— In other words, if he leaves now, he'll be inconsiderate to Lee Ki-Yeon. He's inflexible and narrow-minded, so he believes he needs to take responsibility for his actions. Makes sense, right?

*'Yeah, that seems to be the case—no, I think that's the case.'*

If he hadn't labeled it as a date, he would have been able to excuse himself and leave, but he had already said that this was a date. He thought he needed to be polite. Elves were narrow-minded, but Elias was worse than the average elf.

Of course, he wasn't fine with the situation. He obviously looked shocked by the turn of events, and he definitely wanted to get out right now, but he couldn't choose whether to be rude to his date and follow Jo Hye-Jin or work out the misunderstanding later.

*'It's too late.'*

And he was already being rude…

"You're pretty rude," I said.

"…"

"Don't you think it's rude to think about someone else when you're on a date with me?" I asked.

"How—"

"How did I know? You suddenly looked away in the middle of our conversation, and you look anxious like you want to leave right now. It's pretty obvious. Anyway, I just made a guess, but I'm disappointed to hear you confirm it," I interrupted him.

"I'm sorry, but—"

“Let’s go,” I said.

“What?”

“I said let’s go. It seems like you don’t want to be with me, and I’m feeling kind of uncomfortable spending time with you, Mr. Elias,” I told him.

“…”

“Obviously, I no longer want you to contact me, and you don’t need to thank me for today. If it bothers you that much, then feel free to pay me back in gold. Come to think of it, we should’ve done that from the start. This is the easiest way,” I said.

“…”

“Since I helped out the younger sister of the Union of Others' leader, a hundred gold should be enough. You cherish her a lot, right? You don’t have to give it to me in person… Feel free to send it by mail or anything,” I said.

With that, I got up and left.

I cast a scornful look at him and acted like I was really angry

However, the most important part here was the sadness inside me. It was a sadness I couldn’t hide and could only be erased by someone who had been betrayed before. I wanted to hide the fact that I was a tragic heroine, but I couldn’t hide it no matter how hard I tried.

“P-Please wait. I’m sorry,” Elias said.

“…”

“Miss Lee Ki-Yeon,” he called out.

“Let go of me,” I said.

"…"

"I'm not anyone's substitute," I told him.

*'That was a great line.'*

He grabbed my hand, seemingly out of desperation, and I couldn't shake him off by myself. However, he let go of my hand as soon as I told him to let go of me. Upon letting go of my hand, he no longer had any excuses to grab me again.

To make matters worse, my eyes were already filled with tears.

Of course, I wasn't crying because I wanted anything or something.

*'I just want him to be curious.'*

I wanted to make him wonder why I was crying, and I wanted him to feel curious about the story behind these tears. An affection normally sprouted from curiosity, after all.

Being curious about Lee Ki-Yeon as a significant other wasn't hard, but it was hard to be curious about her as a human being.

"Miss Ki-Yeon… wait…" Elias said.

*'Geez, why is he being so pathetic? Can't he just let me go?'*

I didn't look back because I needed to show him that I had no lingering feelings.

*'It wasn't bad.'*

But…

*'I wonder if Hye-Jin is hurt.'*

*'I don't think so… I think she was just surprised… '*

*‘She did say she wasn’t sure about her feelings.’*

It was highly likely that she had no feelings for him.

Rather than saying that she felt betrayed, it was better to say that she unconsciously reacted that way out of shock. She was not sad; she was surprised, as she had seen something she wasn't supposed to see.

That had to be the reason she ran away immediately.

*‘She hasn’t posted anything on Benigoa Net… Where is she right now?’*

Jo Hye-Jin ended up at the Laves Oasis.

— *Ah*. Alps… I’m sorry… but I forgot… that I had something else planned…

It sounded like she had plans to meet with Alps, but she ran away from where they had promised to meet, so there wasn’t much she could say to her.

She was too sad to return to her room, but the Park-Ki-Ri siblings, Cha Hee-Ra, and the Red Mercenary Guild had taken over the other taverns, so she couldn’t head there.

They were drinking, so she was worried about running into them. In the end, she chose to take a stroll at night.

Unlike during the afternoons, the oasis was really empty at night. I saw a few people wandering around, but they couldn't recognize Jo Hye-Jin.

Jo Hye-Jin was sitting in a corner, so she didn’t have to worry about running into people she was familiar with. Moreover, the place gave off a really nice atmosphere, so it was the perfect time to have a drink.

The woman wearing a blue hood seemed to have thought the same thing as me because she was staring at the object in her hand.

And that was when I saw a figure walking up to her…

— Are you alone?

— *Huh? Ah!*

— *Ah!* We've met before. So you're… Miss Jo Hye-Jin…

*"Damn it, noona. What the hell? You said you weren't going to be Lee Ji-Hoo again," I scolded her.*

[Hold on. Hye-Jin is going through a hard time. I'm just trying to comfort her.]

"This is a breach of contract, noona. Get rid of Lee Ji-Hoo right now. I thought you were in the middle of the Find Daddy event? Have you been monitoring it, and have you made preparations for it?" I asked.

[It's prohibited at night anyway. It's against the rules, and I'm sure Dialugia is doing her job.]

"Where are they right now? I guarantee that if you don't keep their eyes on them, they'll carry out that quest," I told her.

[So you want me to just leave Hye-Jin alone? She had just witnessed a man, who apparently liked her, on a date with a beautiful woman. Her self-esteem will go down if I just leave her alone. Her self-esteem is already low, so she needs meetings like this to ensure that it won't plummet into the abyss.]

*'What the hell is she talking about?'*

Lee Ji-Hoo was staring at Jo Hye-Jin in a completely different way from before. Based on the situation, it seemed that the immature Lee Ji-Hoo no longer existed.

Lee Ji-Hoo, a guild master of a major guild in Castlerock, tried to start a new life with Lee Ki-Yeon, but it didn't work out. His family died mysteriously, and he was pushed into a corner.

Based on Ji-Hye noona's words, Lee Ji-Hoo was in a transitional period, and

he would either awaken as a fallen archduke or a tyrant.

Blinded by rage, Lee Ji-Hoo was steadily falling into madness, and he had lost all faith in humanity due to the mysterious deaths of his family.

Eventually, he attempted to use Lee Ki-Yeon as a tool for his revenge, and he became a monster for it.

However, his choices were actually made to protect Lee Ki-Yeon, and it became an inevitable choice, as he didn't want to have a hindrance or a weakness in his quest for revenge. Of course, this was known only to Lee Ji-Hoo.

The current Lee Ji-Hoo no longer radiated the youth of his past self. He was corrupted, and he looked exhausted by his quest for revenge.

*'I think she said he was attacked by an assassin.'*

Lee Ji-Hoo became a monster who was willing to use whatever tool was around him to achieve his goals. Naturally, Lee Ji-Hoo had to have approached Hye-Jin to use her for his revenge.

"Are you trying to hurt Hye-Jin, noona?" I asked.

[What do you mean by hurt? *Ah*, Hye-Jin isn't someone I'm going to use. It started out that way, sure, but he'll gradually open up to Jo Hye-Jin. When he's with her, his madness goes away. Although it's only for a moment, he can rest comfortably with her, and—]

"Noona, are you abandoning Ki-Yeon?" I asked, interrupting.

[…]

"Are you?" I asked.

[It's not like that, Ki-Yeon. Are you jealous?]

*‘She’s crazy.’*

“Anyway, stop doing that,” I told her.

[Just get ready. You really think I'll do something like that when I’m not a psychopath? I’m just trying to help her mentally, just in case. I’ll talk about random things and ask what she thinks about Elias. I think it’s best if you go to sleep.]

“…”

[I already told Lonovera and explained the story to her.]

*‘Yeah, I like it.’*

This noona was aware of the stories I liked. Lee Ji-Hoo wasn’t the only person who would appear in Season Two; there was also a new story for Lee Ki-Yeon that was unknown to even Lee Ji-Hoo and Lee Ki-Yeon herself.

Of course, the grand story had yet to be revealed to the world, but as Lee Ki-Yeon became more and more aware of just how filthy the world was, her pure negative energy would become stronger until the awakening of an unknown power inside her.

*‘I like this.’*

It was a darkness unknown to even Benigoa and the major gods of the continent. Only Elune was aware of it, and he tried to stop this tragedy through Elias.

“You really think he’ll show up tomorrow?” I asked.

[What is he going to do about it? You think he’ll be able to stand still upon learning about how the continent is at risk of getting destroyed? Elves have a strong sense of duty, and it applies to Elune as well. To be honest, I feel like the standards are pretty high, but if he wants to be Hye-Jin’s partner, he needs to be able to betray his god and the world.]

*‘She’s right.’*

[But I don’t think he can abandon Elune for Hye-Jin. Honestly, I don’t even know whether this test is even worth it or not. He can’t even betray Elune, so how can he betray the continent? I’ll only accept him if he shows that he has the determination to start another life upon failing to protect Hye-Jin.]

*‘That’s true.’*

[Anyway, be prepared for tomorrow morning. Yeon-Soo will help you dress up, and your color for tomorrow will be blue. You have to wake up early as well.]

As if proving the veracity of Lee Ji-Hye's words…

“Do you mind?” Elias asked.

“I told you not to follow—”

“I’m sorry,” he interrupted.

“*Whoo…* I don’t know why you’re doing this, but…”

“Please…” he begged.

“Follow me,” said Lee Ki-Yeon.

“…”

I saw blue skies above Elias, who nodded in agreement.

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1. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1049
# PICNIC (12)

“It must’ve rained yesterday,” I[1] said.

“Yes, it’s been pouring since dawn,” Elias said.

“I was wondering why the sky was unusually clear today. But this is really something… I mean, the Laves Desert is famous for not getting any rain,” I said.

“I know. I heard the last time it rained… was about five hundred years ago. It's been a long time, even by our standards,” Elias remarked.

“*Ah!* Have you heard of it, Mr. Elias? When it last rained in the Laves Desert…” I trailed off.

“…”

“It was also the day when the desert elves’ god, Sahaga, and Evil God Gela, met and parted ways. The tears shed by Gela turned into rain, and it fell upon the Laves Desert…” I added.

“…”

“Sahaga was a pretty romantic god. There are many reasons why Sahaga never appeared on the continent again, but according to a few scholars… it’s not because he had turned his back on his sons and daughters. It’s more like he can’t show himself; it's not that he doesn’t want to show himself.

"He made some sort of deal, and the deal must have stated that he could no longer get involved with the continent,” I explained.

“That’s…”

“It’s all for the sake of meeting Gela again. She’s supposedly asleep somewhere around here. Sahaga's request was the reason Gela is still alive, even though she was supposed to have been executed a long time ago.

"Sahaga also received permission to visit the continent from time to time to meet Gela, who is asleep in the desert somewhere. The legend is that the two are allowed to meet occasionally, and it would rain each time they parted ways,” I added.

“It’s kind of different from what I know. Sahaga loves his children more than anyone else, and the reason he hasn’t shown himself to the desert elves is that…” Elias trailed off.

“One can make multiple interpretations in theology. It’s a famous story. Who would dare question Sahaga’s love for the desert elves? Considering the innate talents of the desert Elves, you can really tell how much sacrifice he made when creating his people…” I said.

“He cherishes the desert elves more than anyone,” Elias added.

“But never showed himself, and not once did he let them hear his voice,” I said.

“…”

“If my interpretation is correct, I think I can understand Sahaga's feelings. He had abandoned everything for the person he loved. In return, he can meet her for a few minutes occasionally, but that’s how much Sahaga loved Gela.

"His love was so deep that he could abandon everything he had for her. He had abandoned his children and the land he loved…” I explained.

“You must have a lot of interest in theology,” he pointed out.

“Didn’t I tell you? There was a god I used to serve,” I said.

“Could you tell me which god you used to serve?” Elias asked.

“…”

“…”

“Elune,” I replied.

“What? Really?” Elias asked, sounding astonished.

“Is it illegal for humans to serve Elune? I used to be a follower of Elune. You probably think that I’m lying, but I heard Elune's voice as soon as I was summoned here.” I revealed.

“Elune’s voice…” Elias muttered.

“After getting out of the tutorial dungeon, I rejected many offers… and moved to a neutral city to live as Elune’s follower. It’s rare in neutral cities, but Elune’s temple does exist, and of course, the followers there are all elves,” I said.

“I have an idea… as to what happened. Were you…” Elias trailed off.

“Discriminated?” I said, finishing his sentence.

“…”

“Humans aren’t the only ones who reject things that are different from them. It’s the same for the other races. I think some of the high priests were unhappy with the fact that I, a human, became a follower of Elune.

"I can’t explain the entire situation to you… but I basically made the decision to leave. And I lived as a mage after that,” I explained.

“Could you tell me which temple it is and who they are? If what you’re saying is true, then this… this… I don’t know how I can comfort you. It’s just ridiculous. The least they could have done was to avoid discriminating against anyone inside Elune’s temple.

"I-I can’t believe… that happened…” Elias asked.

“Forget it. It’s all in the past. Even if you punish them now… nothing will change. It’ll just make me look bad. They weren’t bad people. It’s just that they can't accept those who are different from them. And aren't humans the same, too?” I told him.

“I never thought about that,” Elias mumbled.

“It's natural for you to overlook it given your position—*Ah!* It’s raining. How interesting. Does it rain this often here?” I asked.

“Indeed. Should we take a break?” Elias suggested.

“For what? This is nice. It’s like a festival. There are people dancing in the rain, the lizardmen are cheering, and even the monsters are out enjoying the rain.

"Rain shouldn’t be important to them, but they seem to be enjoying themselves beneath it,” I told him.

“Yes, they really seem to be enjoying themselves. It’s not like this rain can cool off the heat in Laves, and this place has already been blessed, so it does not matter even if it doesn't rain,” he said.

“That’s great,” I said.

“M-Miss Lee Ki-Yeon?” Elias stuttered.

“What? You don’t want to stand next to me even for a second?” I questioned.

“You’re… too close,” Elias answered.

“We only have one umbrella. And… didn't you come here to apologize to me? In that case, you should grant me one wish. What? Should I just go back?” I asked.

"…"

"…"

"By the way, where are we headed?" Elias asked.

"I'm not sure. We're just walking aimlessly since we don't really need a destination. But, Mr. Elias," I paused.

"Yes, Miss Lee Ki-Yeon?" he answered.

"Why did you come back? I told you that I was fine…" I asked.

"I can't really tell you, but…" Elias paused.

"What kind of answer is that?" I asked.

"A dream…" Elias trailed off.

"What?"

"I had a dream. It was a dream about you, Miss Ki-Yeon," Elias replied.

"Interesting. We were strangely intertwined the first time we met, and you saw me in your dream, and that's why you decided to find me the second time around? You know that's kind of strange, right? So what kind of dream was it?" I asked.

"It's hard to say," Elias answered.

"What the? Are you playing with me?" I complained.

"No, it's nothing like that. I-It's just… I was worried about you… and I hope you realize that I don't mean anything bad by it," Elias clarified.

"Did you have a dream about my death?" I asked.

"…"

"…"

"How—"

"Did I know? I wonder how? Would you believe me if I told you that I had a strange dream as well?" I asked.

"What?"

"I was inside this pitch-black space in my dreams. It was really dark. I couldn't see or feel anything. It was like I was dropped into an empty space. I couldn't escape from the darkness. I yelled as loudly as I could, but no one could hear me," I told him.

"…"

"I screamed for help nonstop, but my voice eventually disappeared, and I sank deeper and deeper into the waters. I was crying. I wanted someone to notice me and come for me. Many people popped into my head, but do you know whose voice I heard?" I asked.

"…"

"It was your voice, Mr. Elias. It was definitely your voice," I answered.

"Really?"

"It was a really dark place… but I saw light from where your voice was coming from," I told him.

"So… what happened?" Elias asked.

"The dream ended there, with me looking anxiously at the light. It felt so good to have that glimmer of hope in the darkness. I didn't see what happened in the end, but I was still happy because I saw that light.

"That's the reason I'm forgiving you, Mr. Elias. *Ah!* I haven't forgiven you

*completely,*" I told him.

"…"

"Now it's your turn, Mr. Elias. What kind of dream did you have?" I asked.

"I…" Elias paused.

"…"

"I had a similar dream…"

"That's no fun. Are you really going to be like this?" I complained.

"I can't tell you all the details, but I'm sure it's similar to your dream. I'm sure of it. In the dream… I was searching for you, Miss Ki-Yeon. I was in a ruined city. Eventually, I found you, but just like you, I didn't see the end of the dream," Elias answered.

"…"

"…"

"That's… kind of surprising," I commented.

"…"

"It's not even that surprising, especially on a continent where all sorts of things happen, but I'm wondering… whether it was some kind of… precognitive dream or not," I mumbled.

"Excuse me?"

"Don't… think that I'm weird for saying this, okay?" I warned him.

"I won't think of you that way, Miss Ki-Yeon," he said.

"Do you… believe in destiny?" I asked.

“…”

“…”

“Destiny?” Elias repeated.

“Destiny…” I said.

“In my hometown, some people say that people are connected by an invisible red thread,” I said.

“What do you mean by that?” he asked.

“It means that people are connected by a red thread the moment they’re born. This red thread will never break and can even turn mortal enemies into lovers. It’s a ridiculous superstition, but I believe it.

"No, I started believing in it. You can’t help but believe it,” I answered.

“What?”

“Am I the only one who thinks that way? Do you… not feel anything, Mr. Elias?” I asked.

I saw Elias looking at me quietly with anxious eyes.

“Did you… really not feel anything?” I asked.

A woman in a blue dress appeared in his eyes.

“You… don’t feel it?” I asked again.

That was probably when it stopped raining…

The clouds cleared, and like magic, sunlight shone through the holes in the clouds, illuminating the world underneath.

Elias remained quiet. He just stood there silently without confirming or

denying my ridiculous comment about us being destined to be together despite having lived completely different lives.

“It stopped raining,” I said.

“…”

“I really like looking at the blue sky after it rains,” I told him.

“…”

“Honestly, I don’t… really like the rain. It’s a blessing to these people… but it makes me sad. That must be why I like the clear sky after it rains,” I continued.

“Miss Ki-Yeon,” Elias said.

“It’s like it’s telling us that something good will always happen after something sad,” I added.

“…”

“I hope… that a day like that will come into my life someday,” I said.

“…”

“It would be really nice… if that kind of day comes…” I repeated.

I shed a few tears.

The ruler of Everia said nothing and simply hugged me, who was crying.

“Mr. Elias…” I mumbled.

“…”

*‘It only took six hours, you unfaithful bastard.’*

## 1. Lee Ki-Yeon's Point of View ☜

# CHAPTER 1050
# PICNIC (13)

[Did you get home safely, Mr. Elias?]

[Yes, did you, Miss Ki-Yeon?]

[That's why I'm sending you this message. You even walked me back to my place, *hehe*. I had a lot of fun today. I didn't think we would continue our relationship like this. It's really interesting.]

[You're right.]

[Actually, I thought our meeting yesterday was going to be the last, but… I didn't think you'd hug me so affectionately…]

[I'm sorry about yesterday. I made a really big mistake, Miss Ki-Yeon.]

[And you made up for that mistake today.]

[I'm glad you think that way.]

[Anyway, you don't need to think too deeply or worry yourself over it. You don't have to tell the press… Actually, to be honest, I hope you don't tell them. It's a little burdensome… *hehe.*]

He wasn't replying. Perhaps he had yet to realize the fact that we were already dating.

[I might be getting worried for no reason… since we're not in a serious relationship yet, but there are various issues to handle, such as the successor of Everia. Of course, I'd be happy if you've already thought that far… b-but I still need time to think… I want to take my time rather than rushing into it.]

He had to be startled by that message.

[I didn’t insult you, did I? ㅜ]

He had to be really flustered. He had seen my message, but he had yet to reply. There could have been some kind of misunderstanding, as it was not like Elias had confessed to me. However, relationships weren't necessarily formed through words alone.

He hugged me, and he took me back to my place quietly while we held hands, so it was more than a simple date. Our relationship was formed through our actions and emotions alone. I was not sure about the elf, but from innocent Lee Ki-Yeon’s point of view, it was enough to consider it a confession.

*‘It wasn’t a simple exchange of emotions.’*

It was an exchange of souls—both Elias and I knew that. No one would think that our soul exchange was an ordinary one.

We were clearly… riding the great wave of destiny. On that day, Elias and I looked at the sky after the rain and confirmed that there was a red thread around our finger, connecting us together.

*‘You’re rude if you don’t say anything after that.’*

Twenty minutes later, I finally got a reply.

[I wasn't… insulted…]

I used my Telescope and saw Elias with a hand on his forehead. He placed his Goddess’ Hand Mirror on the desk.

[I think there was a bit of a misunderstanding…]

[What?]

[We shouldn’t be talking about this through messages. How about we meet

tomorrow and talk?]

[*Ah*… sure. Should I look forward to it?]

[No… it's nothing to look forward to.]

I felt like he wanted to pretend that the exchange of souls never happened. He was tapping his hand mirror while sighing, and his face was filled with worry. If Jo Hye-Jin hadn't existed, he would have picked Lee Ki-Yeon's route.

However, Jo Hye-Jin was here, so he was hesitating between the two women.

*'That jerk.'*

Jo Hye-Jin had always been in his heart, and he had always looked up to her. She had also changed his opinion on humans. When he felt that perhaps it was a love that would come only once in a lifetime, another woman he liked suddenly appeared in his life.

*'As for me… '*

He was just worried about me for some reason. Of course, if one were to look at it from the outside, one would see that Lee Ki-Yeon was more than someone he was worried about. Elune had picked me as his partner, and I was a woman connected to him through the red thread of destiny.

He could not just abandon Lee Ki-Yeon.

According to Ji-Hye noona's lore, Lee Ki-Yeon's mental state was extremely unstable, so she could collapse at any moment. In addition to losing everything, she was betrayed by the person she thought was her true love. She was pretending to be fine, strong, and confident, but Elias saw the scar deep in her soul.

Elias was the first person to confront her directly about her scar.

*'There's also the part about how she's connected to the destruction of the*

*continent.'*

*"Ji-Hye noona."*

— I'm Lee Ji-Hoo right now. And I'm texting Hye-Jin right now, so let's talk later.

*"No, it's not that. I think he's close to falling for it, which makes today our first day as a couple."*

—…

*"…"*

*"I expected it, but he doesn't have an ounce of loyalty in him. That elf jerk. Saying that today is our first day as a couple is forcing it, so I really don't think he's loyal. I don't think we need to carry out the last test."*

— No, we should still do it. Human or elf, their true nature comes out during the worst-case scenario. You can't even say for sure that Ki-Yeon has completely fallen for him. More importantly, we need to end this soon.

*"What?"*

— This story. I wasn't going to take this seriously, but I don't know when I'll get another opportunity like this. We need to end this one way or another. I'm glad we're on vacation. This is the kind of vacation I was expecting.

*"You really want to use the continental destruction script?"*

— You really think I would do that? I'm just setting the mood. Did you see the new script I sent you? Let's talk again after you've reviewed it.

*"What about today?"*

— Let's end things here today. You have work to do as well. It's your favorite hobby.

"What is it?" I asked.

— Using your telescope to watch people and taking an interest in other people's lives.

*'She didn't need to say it like that.'*

But she wasn't wrong.

*'It's fun watching people play.'*

At first, I was honestly upset that I had to spend money on it, but then I thought it was worth spending money on the Telescope.

— Give me another!

— You're drunk, Miss Ye-Ri.

— But what are Ki-Young oppa and Hyun-Sung oppa doing?

*'Looks like she's drunk. She called me oppa, after all.'*

— I think hyung-nim is playing with the kids… and Hyun-Sung bro said he was preparing for an important event…

— So we can hang out once that's done, right?

— We have the group schedule. It was canceled because of Miss Dialuria and Max, but once this is over, I'm sure we'll get together again. *Ah!* Miss Belier, Miss Alps! Over here!

— Hello, everyone.

— What's with that formal greeting? Just relax.

— They should still show respect. If they don't, they'll start acting up, Mister Deok-Gu. This is unimaginable back in my day… It seems times have truly changed.

The Park-Ki-Ri siblings and the rookies were having a small get-together.

— No, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Only children are allowed to participate in Find Dad.

— I-I-I want to participate as well. Oppa said he'd give a reward.

— Then why don't you ask Sera? I'm sure Sera will find him.

— S-Should I? I'm allowed to do that, right?

— Yes, of course. Let's go to sleep now.

Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora were getting ready for bed.

— It's peaceful.

— You're right.

— I hope it remains peaceful…

Elena looked up at the sky with a worried gaze while Sun Hee-Young drank tea with a relaxed face. It wasn't that late, but I was happy to see everyone enjoy life in their own way.

Park Lian seemed to be unhappy with her equipment, as she was spending a long time in the item shop. Meanwhile, Yoo Ah-Young and Lee Chang-Ryeol were on a date late at night.

Rafael's party arrived late, so they were still looking around the city.

Hee-Ra noona was sitting with Kasugano Yuno, and the former was drinking brewed alcohol from a large bowl. Colonel Smith was sitting on a boulder by himself, trying to establish a serene mood.

*'Ah! They invited the Mist Summoner, too?'*

Some of those invited were people familiar to me but were not necessarily

close to me.

I looked around the city with my Telescope and was about to go to sleep when I realized that I hadn't seen the children yet.

*'Where did they go?'*

I looked around frantically, but I couldn't see them. Dialugia was missing as well. As if zooming into the Laves Desert wasn't enough, I looked around for a while and finally found the children.

*'What the? What are you guys doing?'*

— Are you ready?

— Yes, noonim.

— Yes, unni!

*'Where are you guys?'*

— You're doing great getting its attention! Cheru! Thro! Get a hold of yourselves!

— I'm sorry.

— Sena! Sena! Sena[1]! Answer me!

— O-Okay, n-n-noonim!

— Follow Max's instructions! He'll give us the coordinates! You won't get hurt as long as you follow his instructions. It's only a Legendary dungeon. It's *just a* Legendary dungeon! *Eek!* You useless kids! Move! It's going to transform!

— Watch out, Cheru!

- Noonim! Don't shoot yet! Ch-Cheru… Cheru!

— Cherubim has already moved out of the way! Right, Domi?

— Yes, unni!

It had been a while since I saw Dialuria in her giant dragon form. Her Breath was similar to Dialugia's back when she was still in her prime. The mysterious monster that was struck by her Breath roared before flying into a wall.

Thronus picked up his sword and jumped into the air to cut off its head.

— Assist Thro! This is just the first boss! What the hell did you learn?! You said you've been in dungeons and have completed many tasks!

— Th-They're kind of different, unni. I don't know why… but these monsters…

— Damn it! Max! Change formations! This won't work! It's time for tactical Dialuria!

— Okay, noona!

Numerous screens appeared above Max, who was being protected by golems.

Dialugia transformed into her human form and grabbed a sword before pushing Thronus away.

— I'll take care of it! Back me up!

— O-Okay!

I thought the dungeons in Laves Desert had already been cleared?

— I knew it the moment I saw this dungeon. The Red Mercenary Guild has already cleared this area, so why do you think there's still a dungeon here?

— That’s…

— Yeah. It’s highly likely that Dad created this dungeon.

*‘No, I didn’t create it.’*

— He was probably trying to test us. It’s probably like a coming-of-age ceremony.

— You think so? You think Father…

— You dummy! Do you know why we still haven’t received the Blue Guild’s official badge yet? It means we’re not qualified yet! We've grown physically, but we haven’t grown mentally!

*‘What are you guys doing right now?’*

For some reason, I had a sense of foreboding.

I took my eyes off the kids and turned to find Kim Hyun-Sung looking like an evil spirit.

— Damn it. Why can’t you finish it…

— Please spare me. P-Please… spare me, God of Sunset.

— I don’t have a lot of time left. Mr. Ki-Young is really looking forward to it… Do you know what the problem is?

— I-I don’t have enough catalysts. Chanelia Hermes' strength is higher than we thought…

— *Whoo…* everything has to be perfect…

*'What the hell are you doing… '*

— So what do you need?

*'What are you doing… '*

— We need at least… a Mythic… catalyst.

---

1. not a typo. ☜

# CHAPTER 1051
# PICNIC (14)

— A Mythic catalyst?

— That’s right. I know this doesn’t make any sense… a Legendary catalyst isn't working… so I assume only a Mythic catalyst will work.

—…

— If you’re okay with just summoning a soul… we’ll do our best. We’ll complete it… even if it means risking our lives…

— Just summoning a soul won’t help at all, and I already told you! The important part here is that they'll be intact in this world, even if it’s only for a few moments.

— C-C-Chanelia Hermes’ soul is refusing to connect with an ordinary body. The only way around this is to prepare a slightly better body. Please… I have a wife and children. God of Sunset… please show us mercy just this once…

— So high-quality materials are still needed, even if they are not on a transcendent level.

— That’s right! The body doesn’t have to be in the best condition. For example, they can be traces… or just parts…

— *Wheeew…*

I saw Kim Hyun-Sung mumbling to himself.

— But… Altanus’ body is gone… *wheew.* Damn it…

-…

"…"

Hyun-Sung…

*'You're not a psychopath, are you?'*

After casually blurting out something that could terrify even black mages, he grabbed his head and sighed. The situation itself was so shocking that it felt like I was watching a cheesy comedy show, but Kim Hyun-Sung looked really serious.

*'He didn't make such a huge offer because he thinks that those damned black mages can't do it, did he?'*

I was sure it wasn't far-fetched, but alchemy, black magic, and magic basically followed the law of equivalent exchange. Assuming that Chanelia Hermes' soul was higher in rank than ordinary souls, it was only natural to pay a price of equal value.

I had no idea what Kim Hyun-Sung had prepared as materials, but since he had decided to do this, he had definitely prepared high-quality material.

Was it because they were an artist?

*'If the soul's nature is picky, then it'll be even harder.'*

The problem was that they needed a Mythic catalyst, and they also had yet to find a fleshly body that Chanelia Hermes was willing to connect with.

Altanus' body had already turned into dust, and Kim Hyun-Sung couldn't find a body that was on a similar level at short notice. Kim Hyun-Sung could obtain such materials from monsters, but it was impossible to know what side effects would occur when a human's soul descended upon a monster carcass.

The task of converting those materials into something that humans could safely influence was difficult. In fact, only alchemists on my level could do

something like that.

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't ask for my help.

Regardless of how these black mages were feeling…

*'I'm sure he's going to cause trouble.'*

Naturally, I grabbed my hand mirror.

*"Mr. Hyun-Sung?"*

Through the telescope, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung reach out for his hand mirror.

— Hello, Mr. Ki-Young. Are you enjoying your vacation?

*'That was fast.'*

*"Of course. I never imagined you'd take care of me this much. It feels like this is the first time I've gotten a good rest ever since I was summoned here. It can't get any better than this."*

— Thank you for telling me that. I can try harder then…

*"What? What are you saying all of a sudden? There's no need to try harder? Hehe. I'm telling you… that I'm really satisfied…"*

— I'm sorry…

*'What are you sorry about?'*

*"I wasn't expecting an apology… I'm not sorry; I'm grateful… ^^;;"*

— I'm really… sorry.

*"No, I'm satisfied."*

— But you can really trust me this time. I really won't let you down this time.

*"I'm being honest with you… I'm really grateful."*

*'No, that's not what I meant… '*

He had to be thinking that I was nagging at him, as I had been nagging too much these days.

*'Maybe I've been too harsh on him.'*

I used my Telescope to look at Kim Hyun-Sung again, and I saw that he looked anxious.

He lowered his head as if he had ruined everything.

*'Do I need to show him that I'm really happy? Will he understand if I tell him my true feelings? Wait, maybe he's even suspicious of that.'*

And that was when someone kicked the door open…

"We're in trouble!"

"What? What? What is it?!" I asked.

"It's really bad. Dialuria, Max… and the children have disappeared," Dialugia answered while crying.

"…"

"…"

"You can't just barge in here like this," I nagged at her.

"The children disappeared. I was watching them, but they disappeared when I was dozing off, and I couldn't find them no matter how hard I looked. I searched everywhere in the city, and I looked at places where the children could be… I even went around Laves Desert… but I couldn't find them," Dialugia explained.

The way she spoke hurriedly wasn't all that different from before. The two large horns sitting on top of her head, her silky black hair, and her slightly exhausted and resentful expression were still the same.

There was a brief silence in the bedroom.

"…"

"…"

"D-Do you happen to be Dialuria's father?"

"That's right," I replied.

"Right now, you look… *Ah*, among humans, there are those who identify with the gender that's opposite of their original gender…" Dialugia said.

"It's not like that. There's a reason why I look like this, so don't ask any questions. I was actually going to contact you… but you came here first," I said.

"*Ah*, we shouldn't just stand around like this. As I said, Dialuria and Max—"

"I know where the children are," I interrupted her.

"What? Really? Where have you seen them?" Dialugia asked.

"Hold on. I was watching them just now. Anyway, you don't have to worry, so calm down," I reassured her.

"How can I calm down?! They're still children!" Dialugia shouted.

*'They are children, but I don't think you need to worry about them that much.'*

— Noonim.

— I'm watching. You can take care of it alone, right, Cheru?

— Yes, I got it.

— I need to take a break but don't put your guard down because I'm recording for the dungeon logs right now. I'm going to send all of it to Dad and show him who contributed the most to the raid. Keep that in mind. Keep in mind that I'm also filming your mistakes!

— You mean…

— Well, I don't know if the Find Dad quest is a group mission or a solo mission. Even if we successfully complete this mission… something unfortunate might happen. I'm talking about the possibility that some people might get the Blue Guild Badge while others won't get it. Except Domi, do you guys know how bad you are right now?

— Especially you, Cheru. All I can say about you is that you're a huge disappointment. Personally, I expected a lot from you.

— Th-That's…

— I want all of us to pass as well… but I wonder… if Dad will be happy if we return when we've achieved so little. Even if he gives the guild badges to you guys out of sympathy, will you be able to wear them proudly?! You think he'll be proud of you guys right now?

— N-No. I-I-I don't want that!

— Then do it right, Sena!

— I-It's Sera, noonim.

*'It's a Legendary dungeon.'*

I saw the children flying around and taking down monsters.

Dialuria nodded in delight at the scene, and anyone would certainly say that they were not ordinary kids. There were no such things as rules when it

came to raiding dungeons, but the children weren't struggling despite that.

Max was a competent commander, and he was with them.

Dialuria was with them as well, and she was urging them to work harder. In addition, Dialuria had already developed her own fighting style that was better than what most humans and dragons used on the battlefield.

There was no need for me to say anything about the children since they had been training every day under their amazing mothers and teachers. They looked like children, but it was not an exaggeration to say that they had already grown into skilled adventurers.

Of course, if I were to exaggerate just a little bit, a party with members as powerful as theirs was comparable to a major guild.

"The children are in a dungeon," I said.

"What?" Dialugia asked.

"They're inside a dungeon, and they're doing fine clearing it…" I added.

"What are you… Could you tell me… where the dungeon is located?" she asked.

"The south of the Laves Desert… Let me grab the exact coordinates…" I answered.

Dialugia was starting to frown. It wasn't a big deal in my eyes, but she looked too serious to say that she was being worried for nothing, so all sorts of thoughts popped into my head. Before I could even hear Dialugia's opinion, I was already thinking about the worst-case scenario.

*'How come they couldn't find this dungeon?'*

I knew Max was competent, but I started questioning why the Red Mercenary Guild couldn't find this dungeon while they were stabilizing the

Laves Desert.

*'Was there a specific condition to unlock it?'*

Sometimes, there were specific conditions that had to be met to unlock a dungeon. There were dungeons that would only unlock when one had offered certain items. There were also dungeons that would only unlock based on natural phenomena, like an eclipse or something.

There were also dungeons hidden by the laws of the continent.

The children probably entered one of those dungeons.

"It… It rained. Didn't… it rain today?" Dialugia asked.

I wasn't dumb enough not to understand Dialugia's words, which she mumbled with a devastated look. There was a tale that was being passed down through generations in the Laves Desert. A legend told by the wanderers of the desert.

"Evil God Gela," I said.

"…"

"The dungeon where Gela was sealed. They entered… using the path that Sahaga used to enter the dungeon," I mumbled.

*'But it's not even an unranked dungeon. It's just a Legendary dungeon.'*

If Gela's limbs were severed before she was sealed, the children would be able to clear the dungeon with their strength, but as a parent, I wanted them to avoid going on such dangerous adventures, especially when they had no idea what they were about to go through.

"*Sob! Heeeuk… Sniff!*"

I understood the crying Dialugia's feelings.

*‘But this is an event. There’s no need to be startled.’*

*"Benigoa?"*

— *Huh?* What? W-What’s wrong?

*"Do you know who Gela is?"* I asked.

— Gela? Gela… Gela? Who was Gela again—*Aah!* I remember! I remember now! Mr. Bel should know better than me, though. I remember him being really close to her.

*"Really? How come it’s the first time I've heard of this? It wasn’t even in the reports."*

— *Ah*… t-that’s… because it happened a long time ago… and the file was already taken care of… I-I think it was buried deep inside the file box. Wait, it’s also an old file…

*"We’re lacking manpower, right?"*

— Are you going to hire someone? I-I don’t know about her… She's skilled, but…]

*"Isn’t it a good idea? If he got demoted upon getting sealed, then it means she’s not affiliated with anyone… Anyway, connect her to me."*

— Okay… hold on. Where’s her contact information… Lauren! Do you have Gela’s—

*"I want you to contact Sahaga as well."*

— S-Sahaga is affiliated with a different dimension right now.

*"It doesn’t matter. Just hurry."*

— Lauren! Sahaga’s channel as well!

*"Just connect me to Lauren."*

After a while, I heard a voice I had heard before.

— It’s nice to meet you, God of Sacrifice and Revival.

I could feel it.

*‘Negotiating with her is not going to be easy… ’*

The voice belonged to none other than Evil God Gela.

# CHAPTER 1052
# PICNIC (15)

"*Eeeeek!*"

"…"

"Please help!"

*'This time… I*[1] *need to prove myself.'*

"*Geez*, move out of the way! I'll take care of it. Sena!" Dialuria shouted.

"I-I-I can do it too. Give me one more chance…" I said.

"It's an order, Sena! Start providing support from the back. It's still dangerous! I think this monster is high in Endurance," she said.

"I-I-It's Sera…" I mumbled.

"Get into formation, everyone!" Dialuria ordered.

"Okay, unni!" Domi answered.

"Okay, noonim."

I saw Cheru charging at the frontline with his wings out. At some point, his wings grew large enough to cover his entire body. It was beyond amazing to see him use his wings as a shield.

The way he endured the attacks of the monster with twelve arms and swung his blue scythe whenever he had the chance made him look like an experienced adventurer.

I was amazed by how he could carry out Max hyung's instructions without any errors.

I was also amazed by Thro, who had reached his current heights with his swordsmanship alone. He had become more agile than before, and he dodged every single attack coming his way while attacking at the same time.

Just like me, Domi was providing support from behind, but she was doing a lot more than me. Honestly, I was in an awkward position. Domi had the special ability of Teleport. She could not Teleport far, but the fact that she could instantly change positions was extremely valuable on this unpredictable battlefield.

I was doing my best with the spells that I had learned from Mom, but…

*'I lack firepower.'*

It felt like I still had a long way to go.

Everyone had grown stronger. Of course, I was no exception.

The number of spells I could use and the amount of mana within me had grown. I had improved so much that I could finally triple cast. I was feeling pretty reassured lately, as I thought I was doing well in close combat, but my siblings' growth was beyond what I had imagined.

*'Auntie said I'm just a slow learner… '*

Running first wouldn't necessarily mean that one would reach the destination first.

This was what Auntie told me each time she comforted me, so I engraved her words in my heart, but I still felt anxious.

My siblings were slowly awakening their powers. My plan was to wield both magic and swords, but Thro and Cherbu were already skilled in close combat, while Domi was skilled at providing support from the rear. In other

words, there was bound to be a difference in our contribution levels.

Of course, I knew how difficult it was to do something like that, but I had to do it, as I was mediocre in both sword and magic. I wanted to give up on magic, but I couldn't because of Mom. I couldn't give up on swordsmanship either, as I had already come this far.

*'Noonim and Max hyung will obviously score the highest. I'll score the lowest.'*

"We've cleared the objective this time as well. The monster was big, but it wasn't hard to deal with. Hey, Sena. Come over here and sort out the items that dropped," Dialuria instructed.

"O-Okay, noonim," I answered.

I was pretty sure that my contribution grade would be…

*'My contribution grade will be a C. Or it might be an F... '*

I caught the monster's attention when the battle had just started. I did my best at close combat, but I couldn't penetrate the monster's skin, so I was immediately sent to the rear.

Max hyung was the only considerate one here, so he gave me a task, but I messed up.

"Sera, are you okay?" Cheru asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine, Cheru. D-Don't worry about me. You might get eliminated because of me…" I said.

"But…"

"Auntie Sora said I'm just a slow learner… This wasn't my time, but if I work hard, I might get another chance next time… a-and Mom said not to be too obsessed with grades. S-S-She said she wanted me to be happy," I told him.

"…"

"Also, Noonim is right. We don't even know if we'll be evaluated individually. Of course, it's highly likely, but anyway, I-I need to do my best so that I can get a good score," I continued.

"Sera," Cheru said.

"It's a good look on you, Sena. You definitely look a lot different from before. You'd be crying like a crybaby right now if this were before, but you aren't crying right now," Dialuria commented.

"Noona?"

"*Hmph.* Gather around, everyone," Dialuria ordered.

"What? Why so suddenly…"

"I have a minor injury," Dialuria informed us.

"What?"

"I must've pushed myself too hard… My left foot has been acting strange for a while. I think it's best if I take a break from raiding for the time being," Dialuria said.

"Th-Then wouldn't it be better for us to go back, Noonim?" I asked.

"Be quiet, Sera. Not even the Blue Guild gave up in the middle of a raid. I'll be fine if I just take a break. Until then… I want Sera to take my role," Dialuria said.

"That's…"

"What? You can do it. If Max and Domi focus their buffs on you, you can do it. The monster just now had high Endurance. I think the next one will be a different type of monster, so I'm sure you can handle it, Sera," Dialuria

explained.

“N-Noona,” I mumbled.

I glanced at Dialuria’s left foot, but I saw no injuries.

“Domi, can you come here and treat my wound?” she asked.

“Sure, unni,” Domi answered.

I felt like I knew why she lied and pretended to be in pain despite the fact that there wasn’t a single injury on her.

It’d be strange not to notice that she was being considerate of me, and I was sure she’d be considerate of me in her report to Father as well. She would report that she had suffered a minor injury, so I had taken her place in the raid.

She had decided to tell a lie that could damage her reputation.

“Noona…” I mumbled.

“It’s really just a minor injury. Go and make some achievements that I can report. You get what I’m saying?” Dialuria asked.

“Y-Yes!” I answered.

“Congratulations, Sera.”

“I’m happy for you.”

“Yeah, thanks, Thro,” I said.

“Then, I think it’s best if we change the formation,” Max suggested.

“Max hyung…” I muttered.

“Don’t worry. It’s an easy task. We’re kind of lacking firepower, so I’ll need to

change the items as well…" Max said.

"Thanks, hyung," I said.

Max hyung was taking out items from the mysterious box floating in the air while Dialuria noona was pretending to be in pain to the point that it was embarrassing.

Thro and Cheru didn't seem jealous. They sincerely congratulated me, as this was a really good opportunity for me.

I hated myself for being jealous of my siblings in the first place.

"T-T-Tha—"

And that was when the atmosphere changed…

"*Huh?*"

No, that wasn't the only thing that changed. All I did was blink, and I suddenly found myself in a completely different place.

*'What the heck?'*

"Domi?"

"I-It's not a trap, unni. This is just… I don't know… what's going on right now…" Domi answered.

"Max?" Dialuria called out.

"I can't control it. The dungeon… it's moving, unni. It's my first time encountering something like this…" Max replied.

Just then…

[The children are here.]

“Ruuuun!!!” Dialuria screamed with all her might.

*BOOOM!!*

Cheru grabbed me and ran to the other side, and then I heard low rumblings from both the ceiling and the ground as they were split apart.

Dialuria transformed in an instant and unleashed a massive Breath.

The golems that Max hyung had summoned created a giant wall.

“It’s an order! Run right now! And get help!” Dialuria instructed.

*BOOM!*

I couldn't really understand what was happening right now.

“Max and I will take care of this place!” Dialuria added

“Okay, noona.”

“*Hmph.*”

One thing I was sure of was that the culprit was staring at us from midair.

[You think I’m going to let you get away that easily, children?]

“You’re ridiculous! And we’re not children!” Dialuria exclaimed.

A woman with long, messy brown hair was in midair, and she was wearing a very fancy outfit with some dried tear stains. This was what an unrealistic-looking person would look like if I were asked to describe someone like that.

It was like I was looking at my father.

It was like I was staring at a being on a whole new level…

*‘No. Father? She’s not like him.’*

The being above us was unstable and imperfect. She wasn't in her true form and was actually losing her essence. It was like she was sealed and was forcefully tied to this dungeon…

"Unni! A transparent wall…" Domi pointed out.

"How long do you think it will take to destroy it?!" Dialuria asked.

"About… th-three hours!" Domi answered.

"I'll give you one hour. Domi! No, I'll give you thirty minutes!" Dialuria shouted.

I thought the space was pretty big, but even the exit was blocked.

[How funny.]

"What's so funny?" Dialuria asked.

[It's foolish to think that a dragon that hasn't even reached adulthood thinks that she can stop me. Looks like there are many things your mother hasn't taught you yet. No matter how young and how ancient your lineage is, a dragon is still a dragon. Unless you don't know the difference in strength, you wouldn't—]

"You sure talk a lot for a demigod. I'm not scared of you at all. Come at me if you're not scared! Max! Help me!" Dialuria shouted.

"Okay!" Max replied.

[Not bad. You've got quite a spirit for a young dragon.]

The giant dragon swung her large claws, but the transparent wall stopped her claws dead in their tracks.

A brown stream of energy surrounded Dialuria and charged at her, but the wall of golems that appeared out of nowhere took the attack for Dialuria.

Dialuria swung her tail, creating a gust of wind. Dust flew everywhere, blinding me.

Moments later, I saw Dialuria in her human form emerge from the dust with a sword in hand, and she was charging at the demigod.

*'That's it!'*

It was an attack that would definitely reach the demigod.

I was convinced of it… until the demigod grabbed Dialuria's hair.

"N-Noona!" I shouted.

"That's an illusion! Good job, Max!" Dialuria shouted.

The real one was behind the demigod, aiming her fangs at her. The giant dragon's mouth broke through the dust. Before the dragon could close her mouth to devour the unstable being…

[It's a cute trick.]

A wave of energy burst out of the demigod.

[That kind of trick doesn't work on transcendent beings, child.]

*Kabooooooooom!*

*'No… '*

Dialuria coughed out blood and collapsed.

Thro was surprised as he ran out of the cloud of dust with a sword in hand.

"Damn it… why isn't it opening?! Why?! Mom! It's an emergency! Mother!" I shouted.

"…"

“Mother! Can you hear me?! Damn it! Did we lose connection, too?!” I yelled.

Domi was focused on destroying the wall while Cheru was protecting me.

*‘Can we not do anything about this?’*

*'Am I really incapable of doing anything at all? A-As always… will I not be able to do anything this time as well? Am I destined to only receive help from others without returning the gesture in kind?'*

Just then, everyone suddenly moved slowly. Perhaps it was because I was thinking about many things at once, but it was like time had slowed down for me.

*"S-Sera can do anything. I-I… believe in you, Sera…”*

I heard Mom’s voice in my head.

“J-Judgement,” I mumbled without realizing it.

With that, radiant golden swords pervaded the air.

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1. Sera’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1053
# PICNIC (16)

It was strange, but it felt so natural that it was like I had known how to do this from the very beginning. I could feel a brand-new power welling up inside of me. It was a novel yet familiar feeling at the same time.

I could clearly feel the changes that were happening to me right now.

There was a burst of radiant golden energy, and I could feel a powerful energy that I couldn't control properly.

I wasn't the only one who felt something strange. When the radiant golden swords appeared, my siblings looked at me in disbelief, wondering if they were dreaming.

"S-Sera…" Cheru stuttered.

"I'll protect you this time… Cheru," I said without realizing it. I actually wanted to run away right now. I spoke and pretended to be fine, but my legs were shaking. However, I gained courage when I saw the golden swords in the sky.

The swords seemed to have been crafted so masterfully that I felt like I could stop the enemy by wielding them.

"Did you… really… just do that?" Cheru asked.

"Yeah, I think so," I answered.

"No… way. Sera… you—"

"You awakened your powers, right, Sera?" Dialuria asked.

“Yeah, Domi. I actually don’t know what’s going on,” I replied.

“Father… will be happy. Congratulations, Sera,” she said.

He’d probably be happy. He'd probably hug me and pat my head before telling me that I had done a good job.

I was so happy at the thought of it alone that I felt like flying.

I wanted to show my father those radiant golden swords. The confusion and chaos that filled my head disappeared in an instant. Upon seeing my awakened powers, I was sure… he would… compliment me. Of course, it wasn't that easy.

“Yeah, but we have to survive this place first,” I mumbled.

[What an interesting power, child. It’s impressive as well. Yeah… it’s kind of surprising.]

“Divine Punishment,” I said.

The swords emitted a radiant light and changed directions. They rained down on the enemy. It was difficult to control each and every sword, but…

*‘I can do it. No, I have to do this.’*

I had to succeed no matter what.

“*AAAAAH!*”

[Nice try… but you’re too weak…]

She was right. Her hands easily blocked the swords that rained down on her. The shockwave that the demigod had unleashed blasted them away, and some couldn’t move forward upon getting blocked by the white veil surrounding the woman.

Despite that, I couldn’t stop attacking, as that was all I could do.

I believed the golden swords could still become even stronger.

“Divine Punishment!” I shouted.

[Not only that… you still don’t know how to control your powers.]

“*Hmph.* Of course, he doesn’t know. He just awakened them,” Dialuria commented.

[You…]

“You thought I was done? Max! Start it!” Dialuria shouted.

“Okay, noona!” Max answered.

— We’re changing tactics. Our goal is no longer to escape the dungeon but to clear it. I’ll send over the plan with Sera as the lead, so please focus, everyone. We’ll start the operation in exactly thirty seconds.

Dialuria's words were delivered to my mind through the party’s communication channel.

Everyone looked at each other and nodded.

If Dialuria noona and Max hyung believed that we could clear this dungeon, then…

*‘There’s hope.’*

Max's calculations had never been wrong, so our chances of victory had to have increased significantly. The golems immediately surrounded Max, and a sturdy defensive barrier manifested around him as well.

This was all for the sake of taking out all elements that were unnecessary to his calculations. I was sure Max was surrounded by Goddess’ Mirrors at the

moment, just like Father whenever he was on a raid.

Twenty seconds later, I heard Max's voice.

— It'll be a little difficult but don't feel pressured. It's okay if you fail. Trust us.

My task was to control the summoned swords.

— Let's do it.

"Okay!"

— Sera, you don't have to answer.

"Okay!"

Countless swords rained down on the woman. Some were fast; some were slow. Some moved vertically, while others moved quickly at bizarre angles.

Obviously, I could not control all of them.

There were more swords that were out of control than swords that were actually under my control, but Max hyung said that it would be okay if I ended up failing.

Domi was manipulating the unnecessary and out-of-control swords among those I had summoned. In other words, Domi was manipulating the variables.

Max hyung was sending directions in real time, while Domi was fulfilling her task faithfully.

Compared to their tasks, my task was a lot simpler because I could see what was happening. Meanwhile, they had to think about every single possibility in order to readjust the directions that were being sent to everyone.

Swords that had lost their way moved toward where Thro, Cheru, and Dialuria were waiting; they all followed the path that Domi had drawn for them.

The vanguards were given the simple task of grabbing the swords that couldn't reach the unstable demigod or were blasted away.

It wasn’t as easy as I thought.

They had to switch places and dodge the unstable demigod’s attack while doing their main task.

The word "flashy" was not enough to describe the three melee warriors.

Thro and Cheru moved forward while helping each other, and Dialuria moved forward with her sword in hand. Domi would occasionally help the three warriors.

I could try my best, but I would never be able to reach the same level of performance as them. After all, I couldn't really approach the enemy, as there were too many radiant golden swords streaking across the air.

*‘But there is something I can do.’*

The unstable demigod swung her arm, looking annoyed. Brown spears manifested and rained down on us from her arm. Dialuria transformed, blocking those spears that were aimed at Cheru and Thro using her large frame.

Spears pierced Dialuria’s dragon body, but the defense gave Thro and Cheru a chance to move past the attacks. They snatched a radiant golden sword out of midair and charged at the unstable demigod.

“Now, Sera!” Dialuria shouted.

“Okay, noona!” I answered.

There really was divine punishment.

*BOOM!*

“Don’t stop! Don’t stop, Sera!” Dialuria yelled.

“*AAARGH!* Divine Punishment! Divine Punishment!” I roared.

“Keep going! Keep going! It’s an all-out attack!” Dialuria shouted.

“O-Okay!” I said.

“Give it everything you got!” Dialuria continued.

“…” “Kill her! Kill her! You villainous jerk! You asshole! Have a taste of a dragon’s Breath! Have a taste of real dragon’s Breath!” Dialuria shouted.

*‘We can win!’*

“*Yaaaaaaaaaaah!*”

*‘We can do it!’*

How long had we been attacking her?

“Stop attacking! Stop attacking!” Dialuria exclaimed.

When the dust from the massive explosion had settled, I saw the imperfect demigod staring at us with an indifferent look.

“N-No way,” I mumbled.

“Shit…” Dialuria said.

“Noona?” I said.

“Shit! Damn it! Let’s move to our next plan, Max!” Dialuria shouted.

"…"

"…"

The woman in front of us smiled.

Dialuria noona transformed back into her human form and grabbed her sword.

And that was when the woman before us opened her mouth…

[Laves!]

"*Huh?*"

[Children, you pass.]

"What?"

"*Ah!*"

[I thought the dungeon was going to be difficult, but who would've thought that you'd clear this dungeon with flying colors?]

"*Ah…* I-I see," Dialura said.

"What?"

"That's what it was. *Whew*… I'm glad. *Whoo…* I'm really relieved," Dialura added.

[According to the God of Sacrifice and Revival, your courage, the way you care for each other, your determination, and the fact that you did not lose hope until the end are what helped you pass this dungeon!

[However, he did say to mention the parts you could've done better.]

"*Ah…*"

[To get straight to the point, the God of Sacrifice and Revival isn't in this dungeon, but…]

"Yes?"

[You reached this far, and Mr. Lee Ki-Young, my superior, has prepared a gift for you. The Blue Guild's badge!]

"*Huh?* But this… this isn't the badge!" Dialuria pointed out.

[To be exact, this is a fragment of the badge. Your job is to collect the fragments of the badge that are spread all over the Laves Desert. You've just found the first badge.

[I don't know what kind of hardships and difficult adventures you'll end up in… but all I can do is pray for your future. Maybe—no, I'm sure… you'll experience more danger than you did in this dungeon.]

"Awesome! This is awesome!"

[Also…]

"Yes?"

[The God of Sacrifice and Revival said that there's something he wants to tell you himself.]

"Father said that?" I asked.

The tension went away in an instant. I was embarrassed, and I was crying alone while my siblings were cheering. I couldn't stop myself from crying.

Cheru patted my back to comfort me, and I cried even harder.

However, anticipation soon grew inside me.

*'He must've been watching.'*

"*AAAAH!*"

*'He really must've been watching!'*

"It's Dad! AAAH*!*" Dialuria shouted.

*'He was really… really watching.'*

When I remembered how I had awakened and played a crucial role in clearing this dungeon, I felt more excited than relieved. It was hard to calm down my racing heart because I was excited to hear his compliments and words of encouragement.

"Dad!" Dialuria yelled.

I saw a shadowy figure on the large screen.

[You did well.]

"Dad! Dad! Dad!" Dialuria shouted.

"Father!" Max yelled.

[Dialuria, Max, you two did really well. Thro, Cheru, Domi, and Sera. All of you did really well, too. It was really impressive, and the fact that all of you have grown stronger makes me really happy. Especially you, Dialuria.]

"Thank you," she said.

[I was very touched by how you took care of your siblings. The way you kept your guard up until the end and thought about the next plan reminded me of your mother.]

Just as I expected, he called out each person and praised them for their achievements.

[Cheru, you…]

“Thank you, Father,” Cheru said.

[I have something to tell you as well, Domi.]

“Thank… you,” Domi said.

When it was finally my turn, I stepped forward while calming down my racing heart. I was really excited because my siblings looked at me as if they were getting ready to congratulate me, but…

[Sera…]

“Yes!” I answered.

[You… You’re really… I mean…]

“Yes!”

[*Wheeew…* It’s nothing. I shouldn’t say anything.]

[…]

[I should hand you the next quest, right? It’s not good to dilly-dally. The next quest is obtaining Sahaga's gift. Sahaga is the God of the Desert Elves, and it’s probably best to hear the hints from Gela. Good luck. Enjoy and do your best in your quest. I can’t wait to see it, my children.]

*‘Uh… ’*

“Okay!”

“He must’ve not seen it, Sera,” Cheru said.

“Y-Yeah…” I stuttered.

“Don’t be so disappointed. Once the dungeon log is uploaded, I’m sure Father will check it, and he’ll compliment you by then,” Cheru said, reassuring me.

“Yeah.”

“Now, now! Next is getting Sahaga’s gift. Focus, everyone,” Dialuria ordered.

“Okay, unni,” Domi answered.

“First, let’s take care of the remaining quests and obtain the Blue Guild Badge. Once we're done, we'll go and find Dad. Let’s do a cheer and then head out,” Dialuria suggested.

“Okay!”

“One, two, three! Teamwork!” everyone shouted.

“Teamwork!” I shouted.

* * *

“It was interesting…” I[1] commented.

“…”

“…”

“It *definitely* was interesting,” I said.

---

1. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1054
# PICNIC (17)

*‘They enjoy running around, so I bet they're having a blast.’*

This was their very first adventure—a dungeon raid filled with adrenaline. They had new quests to do and new goals to achieve; their efforts were rewarded with high-quality items, and they felt that they were growing stronger.

It was not an exaggeration to say that this was a real and happy vacation. The children were thrilled, and I saw them gathering their hands in the center and yelling out, “Teamwork!”

Dialuria's face was solemn as she distributed the items that Gela had brought out one by one. I was sure they had a lot of equipment that could be upgraded, so these many items weren't enough for all of them. Despite that, I saw them smiling.

Gela started talking about Sahaga’s gift, and the children's gaze sparkled.

Thronus, Cherubim, and Max, whom I thought were the quiet ones, couldn’t hide their excitement. They looked like puppies, wagging their tails excitedly before going out for a walk. The sight truly convinced me that they were still children.

— *Heuk… heuk…*

— So… there was a sad story behind it.

— Let’s bring back Sahaga’s gift back here no matter what! Don’t worry, Miss Gela! We’ll take care of it.

— I can’t believe something like that had happened in Laves Desert. My

heart breaks even more at the fact that it has become a forgotten tale. Don't you agree, unni?

—Well, the important thing is that all of this is thanks to Dad. Anyway, listen carefully, everyone.

*'Despite being the oldest, Dialuria is the most excited among them.'*

— I'm sure you're all aware since all of you have already received a fragment of the Blue Guild's badge, but the fact that Dad gave us this mission… means that this vacation isn't just a simple vacation. Perhaps Laves City and the desert are big stages.

— What?

— We might be looking for a device that was created for our entrance test to the guild. Don't you guys think it's strange? A vortex of great tales that involve Miss Gela and Mr. Sahaga, the forgotten god of the continent.

— Don't you think it's too difficult for us to take on this task? Before this, all we've done was run errands. We've never gotten involved with anything related to the continent; we've only been taking down weak monsters until now.

— R-Right…

— As I said, this is a test. Yeah, it's an unavoidable test. A test for us to be recognized as worthy adventurers.

*'That's not it… '*

"Yeah, I know you can do it, Dialuria. I'm watching you," Dialugia said.

I couldn't say anything at all, as someone was particularly immersed in all this. Dialugia had been staring at the screen since it appeared. She seemed to have forgotten that I was here as well, as she was so close to the screen that I thought she'd merge with it.

“I see. So that’s what it was! Was all of this a test?” Dialugia asked.

“Yes… well. You could call it that,” I answered.

“Looks like… I was worried again for no reason. I actually think that Dialuria needs to experience something like this, as the dragon's coming-of-age ceremony is markedly different from a human's coming-of-age ceremony.

"Under normal circumstances, she still has about a hundred years left, but I'm sure you know that. Dialuria is more used to spending her time as a human being. I’m sure she's been feeling really uncomfortable due to her dragon lineage,” Dialugia explained.

“…”

“She grows faster, and she's more curious about the world compared to other children. In addition, she has this constant thirst for knowledge. I've been really worried that perhaps those were the reasons behind her discomfort.

"Thankfully, she’s been receiving positive influence from her younger siblings, but it was really heartbreaking to see her attempt at denying her true identity…” Dialugia added.

*‘I know.’*

When Dialuria had just emerged from hibernation, she was really stressed. She hadn't spent that much time hibernating, but it was enough time for her to grow distant from Miss Kim Mi-Young's children, with whom she had a decent relationship at the orphanage run by the Blue Guild at the time.

Back then, she was confused about whether she was a dragon or a human being. Dialugia was right; if it hadn't been for her younger siblings like Max, she would have been even lonelier today.

*‘She became more energetic when the children appeared.’*

“I actually wanted to do something for her… They look great together,”

Dialugia said.

“Yeah… they do. It’s nice seeing her get along with her younger siblings, and she seems to be feeling a sense of responsibility and pride as the oldest.

"The most important thing is that she seemed to have realized that she's not alone and is no longer comparing herself with other children. Honestly, they’re all unique. Max is just a program, while the children were the Outer Gods,” I explained.

“Right,” Dialugia replied.

“To be honest, the children and Dialuria are just children, but I believe their way of thinking and abilities are on the same level as adults. I think rather than making them spend time pretending to be adults or treating them like children, boosting their self-esteem has to be a priority. That is what this test is all about,” I told her.

“I see…”

“…”

“I should apologize. I thought you've decided to live a thoughtless life… I thought you were planning on neglecting your family, as you're too busy taking care of the continent or working on bigger things,” Dialugia said, smiling brightly.

I felt bad when I saw her smile, but I wasn’t technically lying. I was actually planning something for the children, but that plan had to be executed now.

“About Sera—”

“Please don’t talk about him. I’ve been giving him enough love,” I interrupted her.

“Couldn’t you have said something to him?” Dialugia asked.

"…"

"…"

"The words wouldn't come out," I told her.

"I understand how you feel, but I suggest you fix that attitude of yours. They don't seem like it, but they're pretty quick-witted. He probably hasn't realized it yet, but he must be subconsciously feeling like he's being discriminated against. Strictly speaking, Sera is…" Dialugia paused.

"…"

"Sera isn't Seraphim. I do feel bad for him whenever I see him," Dialugia continued.

"Why would you say that when I've been spending time with him the most recently among all the other children? I've been trying my best, so don't pressure me. It's making me feel even more stressed," I told her.

"But still—"

"And I'm sure you're aware because you went to America[1] with me, but his nature hasn't changed. You saw it as well," I reminded her.

"…"

"Anyway, you should get ready," I told her.

"What are you talking about?" Dialugia asked.

"The children's adventure. Sahaga's gift is kind of far from here. You'll need to take me there…" I answered.

"*Ah!* I'll get ready," Dialugia said.

"I'll get ready as well. I stayed up late because of the children," I said.

“Thank you for your hard work,” Dialugia said. Then, she exited the room without saying goodbye.

I looked at the children again using my Telescope and saw that Seraphim[2] seemed particularly sad.

*‘I shouldn’t think about it.’*

While everyone was excitedly talking with each other, he was smiling bitterly. He was laughing with them, but it was like his thoughts were elsewhere. I was sure he was thinking about my reaction just now.

*‘I really shouldn’t think about it.’*

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[You worked hard, Seraphim. (0/1)]

I looked at him again after sending that quest.

And that was when I heard Gela’s voice…

— God of Sacrifice and Revival.

*"…"*

— God of Sacrifice and Revival?

*"Yes, Miss Gela."*

— Did Mr. Sahaga answer?

*"Ah! I haven’t received any answers yet."*

— Really?

*"Yes. We clearly conveyed our intentions, so you don’t have to worry. Miss Lauren is currently in the middle of negotiations, but… I’m sure he’ll come."*

— I understand even if he doesn't come. He had already abandoned his creations once, so I'm sure it won't be hard to do it again. Mr. Sahaga has been struggling a lot since he turned his back on the Desert Elves.

*"You're right. The first time is hard, but the second time is easier. Why are you so worried when he still comes all the way here just to see you? Just stick to the plan, and everything will work out."*

— Okay. I'm counting on you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

My hand mirror rang incessantly during the short conversation, so I stood up and answered the call.

— Miss Ki-Yeon?

*"Ah, yes, Mr. Elias. Could you hold on for a second? I'm really sorry. Something happened at the dorm…"* I told him.

— It's fine. Take your time. I'll be waiting at the cafe.

*"I'm sorry for being late on our first date. I'm usually not like this…"* I said.

— No, it's really fine…

*"I'm really sorry. I need to get ready, s-so I'll hang up first, but I'll pay for everything!" I told him.*

— What?

I hung up without waiting for his answer.

"I'm here, Miss Lee Ki-Yeon," Ha Yeon-Soo announced.

"I'm sorry for doing this every time, Miss Yeon-Soo," I said.

"It's fine. I'm having fun as well, and it's your request," she said.

I greeted Ha Yeon-Soo as she walked into the room.

*‘I’m so busy. It’s such a busy day.’*

Like a singer about to go up the stage, I was dozing off while getting my makeup done.

“Almost done, Miss Lee Ki-Yeon. Would you like to see it? But how do you have such nice skin? I don’t see even a single blemish.

"Come to think of it… you've never really had any blemishes. Are you using that slime gel? The slime gel that the guild master gave you. Is that your secret? I heard it’s hard to get it these days,” Ha Yeon-Soo remarked.

“…”

I looked at the mirror one last time.

*“I’m heading there now, Mr. Elias,”* I said.

— Okay.

*“Could you please wait a moment?”* I requested.

— Take your time.

*“Okay!”* I answered.

Elias' voice was trembling for some reason, and it wasn’t because it was his first date with a woman he was interested in. I knew why Elias' voice was trembling.

*‘He’s trying to break up with me today.’*

It was our first day of getting to know each other, and he was going to tell me that the incident yesterday was all a misunderstanding and that *I* had misunderstood him. He couldn’t give up on Jo Hye-Jin, which was what led him to make this decision, but…

*'He's going to break Lee Ki-Yeon's fragile heart.'*

"Mr. Elias!" I shouted.

"You're here… Miss Ki-Yeon," Elias greeted.

"I am," I said.

He smiled awkwardly, not knowing the fact that the fragment of Gela sleeping inside the woman of destiny was about to awaken…

"Have you eaten yet?" he asked.

"Why would you ask that? I obviously haven't eaten yet, so I could eat with you, *hehe*," I answered.

"*Ha… ha…*"

"I was really looking forward to today. I even took tomorrow off so… I can enjoy today as much as I want," I told him.

"…"

"Shall we get going? We have to get to know each other better. And this," I offered.

"This is…"

"It's called the Ring of Red Thread. I'm wearing it as well. *Ta-da*. It's a ring for couples," I showed him. He welcomed it, and I was sure he could no longer break up with me so easily.

---

1. Veela: Probably that strange white space when he died ☜

2. LKY and Dialugia know that the children are the outer gods, so this is

Seraphim rather than just Sera ☜

# CHAPTER 1055
# PICNIC (18)

*‘Elias would be a real psychopath if he were to break up with me today.’*

I looked genuinely happy as I handed him the unattractive Ring of Red Thread. I even leaned on him while holding his hand. The problem was that he was like an impenetrable fortress. I moved my hand to try to lock fingers with him, but he remained frozen, clearly trying to avoid doing that with me.

*‘If you're going to act like this, why did you lock hands with me yesterday? You’re the one who grabbed my hand first.’*

I wasn't able to sleep, and it seemed that the same went for him.

I was sure that he hadn't been able to accept the fact that we had become a couple without him realizing it. I could see it from his exhausted eyes. He couldn’t decide whether to give up on Jo Hye-Jin or break the heart of innocent Lee Ki-Yeon by telling her the truth.

Based on what he was doing at the moment, I could tell that he was determined to rip my heart to pieces.

*‘Evil bastard.’*

He was so cold, and his plan was even colder.

Even going on a date today was pretty cruel.

It seemed like he was planning on getting rid of his guilt by giving me the best day of my life, but as I said, this was simply to get rid of his guilt and to comfort himself.

It’d be strange if I didn't notice him trying to wallow in self-pity just to get

rid of the sense of guilt. Although he hadn't said anything yet, he looked so serious to the point that I thought he was going to explode at any moment.

"Did something happen?" I asked.

"No, why…" Elias asked.

"It's just that… you don't look so good. Is it… because I was late?" I asked.

"It's nothing like that. I don't mind you being late at all, so you don't have to worry about that," Elias answered.

"Then what is it? Is… the Ring of Red Thread too cheesy? I think I got too excited, then…" I mumbled.

"No, it's not that either," Elias said.

"Then…"

"I assure you that it's not because of you, Miss Ki-Yeon. It's… just…" Elias paused.

"Let's head somewhere else for now," I suggested.

Elias lightened up a bit. Perhaps it was because I was surprisingly quick-witted, but he was forcing himself to smile. Since this was going to be our first and last date, he was acting like he was going to give me the best day of my life, but unfortunately, I had an idea as to how he was feeling. I was simply pretending that I hadn't noticed it yet.

I was worried that his bad imagination would become a reality if I kept asking him questions. I was worried that Elias was going to break up with me, so I couldn't ask him more questions.

And just like that…

*'Our emotions started clashing.'*

Of course, it wouldn't get in the way of our date. The two of us looked perfect on the outside. We were smiling while walking, and we talked about today's plan as well as many different fun stories.

"Where are we going today?" I asked.

"How about we visit the Laves Desert Monster Museum?" Elias suggested.

"*Ah!*"

"I heard you worked as an adventurer at one point… so I thought you might be curious," he said.

"I'm curious! Of course, I'm curious! So you remembered it!" I shouted.

"Of course."

"You said you used to work as a receptionist at an Adventurer's Guild. At the time, the Goddess' Mirror wasn't very common, and I had to imagine many things while reading dungeon logs.

"I'm talking about the stories of first-class adventurers as well as their vivid descriptions of monsters. Those descriptions are so clear that it made my skin crawl. They also talked about unimaginable quests," I described.

"…"

"As I said, I lived a pretty serious life as an adventurer, but reaching Rare was my limit…" I added.

"You don't seem that way…" Elias commented.

"If I had become a priest, I would have received better treatment, but I didn't want to use Elune's power for myself…" I told him.

"*Ah*… I see. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have—"

“It’s fine. It’s all in the past. Anyway, let’s get going,” I interrupted him.

“Okay.”

I pulled on Elias' arn, and the two of us walked into the Laves Monster Museum.

As soon as we entered, I immediately thought, *‘This place is nice. No wonder the entrance fee is so expensive.’*

“*Wow…”*

“It’s not bad,” Elias said.

“It’s better than that. It’s like I'm in the middle of the desert. They must have employed a skilled taxidermy mage because the monsters look so lifelike. See that over there? Isn’t that an infamous desert scorpion? I know only mages who are at least Epic can inflict damage on its shell. It even has three tails,” I explained.

“It’s written that it has a uniquely aggressive nature. The one on display right now must’ve been the leader of a group of scorpions. I remember actual desert scorpions being smaller than this…” Elias pointed out.

“You must’ve… seen one in person before,” I said.

“I remember it was relatively recent… about forty years ago,” Elias answered.

“*Pfft!*” I giggled.

“What? Did I…”

“No—*Pfft!* It's just strange because you said it was relatively recent, but it was actually forty years ago. I wasn’t even born forty years ago. I guess we are indeed of two different races,” I informed him.

“*Ha… haha…* right,” Elias said.

“Well, as long as we like each other, does that really matter?” I asked.

“…”

“Don’t you agree with me, Mr. Elias? I heard from somewhere that the reason people meet each other is that there is a connection between their souls. It doesn’t matter who leaves first, and it doesn't matter even if we’re in two different places. As long as our souls are connected, we’ll always be together…” I added.

“…”

“…”

“I like that saying. I agree as well,” Elias said.

*‘I’m sure you do. The problem is that this isn’t about you.’*

“Anyway, shall we continue looking around?” I asked.

“Sure.”

*‘I remember this being harder than I thought.’*

“It’s incredibly big. Can high-level adventurers… really hunt something like that?” I asked.

“The Red Mercenary Guild will have a hard time hunting that. Legendary named monsters cannot be hunted through high stats alone,” Elias said.

“It’s written here. Apparently, they had to hunt it using a special method, and it is also impervious to physical attacks. They got sulfur balls at the edge of the Laves Desert and used those sulfur balls to hunt it down,” I read.

“That’s right. It sounds like they got a hint upon realizing the fact that this monster never roams toward the edge of the eastern reaches,” Elias said.

*‘It’s really big.’*

This place was big, but this monster was really big as well.

*‘I'm sure the Red Mercenary Guild had a hard time hunting this down.’*

Vanguards disliked hunting big monsters, but the rearguards were fans of massive monsters, as there was a much bigger surface area to hit. Of course, they probably disliked monsters with thick skin.

This monster had a habit of luring in lizards with their skin capable of transforming into what looked like a green cactus, a wanderer of the desert, and other monsters.

*‘That looks interesting as well.’*

There were monsters with unique legs that allowed them to run smoothly on the sand and monsters born with ways to hydrate themselves.

“Apparently, this monster can still be found in the Laves Desert.” I pointed out.

“That’s because the wanderers can’t get water anywhere else but from them. This Desert Water Spider is the only way for them to get water. The wanderers would treat the warriors capable of catching these Desert Water Spiders with the utmost respect,” Elias said.

“That’s understandable since water is more important than food here. The Lizardmen can withstand not drinking water for quite a while, but that’s not the case for the Desert Elves. And I don’t even need to mention the other races,” I said.

Of course, what caught my attention more than their appearance were the materials…

*‘That looks useful.’*

I was talking about the materials from these monsters.

*'It's been a while since I've taken a close look at them.'*

The words "Monster Museum" suited this place, and it was a well-organized place that looked decent both outside and inside. Actually, it was meaningless now, but I was still an alchemist, so I was kind of excited to see so many materials.

At some point, I was so focused that I forgot about Elias. Was this…

*'Hyun-Sung's idea?'*

I remembered mentioning that I wanted to see materials from unique monsters.

They were categorized to be used as training aids for alchemists. When they were preparing the displays for the museum, they had to have gotten help from alchemists.

I thought perhaps they had gotten a few people from the Republic to help them instead of from the Democratic Country.

*'I also like that there are many rest areas where the visitors can take breaks… '*

There were even devices installed in lounges that allowed visitors to look around the museum while sitting down. I'd be embarrassed if it was a misunderstanding, but for some reason, I felt like he was being considerate of me.

*'Come to think of it, this isn't the only place.'*

The same went for the tour bus; the route we had taken was convenient as well.

There were also many other important things…

“About food…” Elias said.

“There's still a lot to see, so how about we take care of it here for now?” I suggested.

“That’s…”

“How about we eat in a restaurant where we can feel the atmosphere during the Laves Desert expedition?” I told him.

“Will you be okay with that?” he asked.

“I spent a lot of time on the field, you know,” I replied.

And I also liked things like this…

I actually disliked suffering in an expedition, and I very much preferred experiencing a dungeon like this. Lee Ki-Yeon was an expert at creating a campfire. I placed a mat and sat on the sand dune. It could not be called glamping, but the environment wasn’t *that* bad.

There was no rusty or broken equipment. They also had a good assortment of items, but it was probably because they needed to have the basics. They were a restaurant, after all.

“Doesn’t it feel like we’re on a real expedition?” I asked.

“Yes… you’re right,” Elias answered.

“If you don’t mind, can you take a picture?” I requested.

“*Oh*… sure,” Elias said.

“Line me up in the center and make sure that my entire body gets captured,” I instructed him.

“Got it,” he said.

“Let’s take a picture together this time,” I suggested.

*‘He really doesn’t know how to take pictures. I can already hear Hye-Jin feeling frustrated.’*

“Not bad. It reminds me of the past. Don’t you think this place is a little too fancy to simply be called a museum? They must’ve expanded the interior using magic because there are so many things to do. Doesn’t this feel more like an amusement park?” I asked.

“I agree. I know the cost of building Laves was astronomical, but this… is more amazing than I thought,” Elias answered.

After we got the menu, I started playing around with the campfire, trying to show him that I was used to living out on the field.

I was busy preparing many things, and I even smiled proudly at the sight of my work.

There was a saying about how elves were close to nature, but as someone who had grown up as one of the leaders of a kingdom, Elias was surely not used to this. He was trying to do something, but he wasn’t satisfied with his work.

Elias seemed embarrassed because he looked away from me, but his actions actually improved the atmosphere. At some point, he revealed a genuine smile.

*‘Accept it.’*

*'You have to accept it.'*

“This is fun, *hehe*. I expected it… but you really aren’t used to this,” I said.

“*Hahaha*…” Elias laughed.

*'You’re happy right now.'*

“Try this,” I offered.

“What about you…” Elias asked.

“I already had some,” I replied.

He was smiling, and the word "happiness" was written all over his face. Of course, I knew that it was only temporary. I also knew that we were going to part ways at the end of this date, but I hoped he wouldn't wake up from this happy dream until then.

I hoped this dream would continue…

“I wish this time would never end,” I said, smiling sadly.

# CHAPTER 1056
# PICNIC (19)

The fun atmosphere suddenly became solemn.

“I really… really… hope this time would never end,” I added.

It sounded sad, and although I wasn’t crying, my eyes looked like tears were going to well up in them anytime soon. My gaze also looked meaningful. Of course, this wasn't a positive sight.

Moreover, my words meant that I knew this moment was going to end at some point.

Elias had to have noticed that as well.

*‘He knows that I know.’*

Elias wasn't questioning when and how I had discovered it. It also seemed that he wasn't worried about the possibility that he was being too obvious.

He was staring at the red thread on his left finger, and I could deduce that he had become aware of my feelings.

“But it will end at some point, right?” I asked.

“…”

“This dream will scatter like dust someday,” I added.

I was screaming at him to deny it and that my words weren’t true, but the heartless jerk ignored my screams. He remained quiet and avoided my gaze by looking into the distance.

“…”

“…”

“All right… shall we get going?” I suggested.

“Sure,” Elias answered.

“Where should we go next?” I asked.

We both got up as if nothing had happened.

*‘Hang in there, Ki-Yeon.’*

*'Cheer up and work hard… try to make this the happiest day of your life. And don’t forget to smile. It’s not over yet. There might… still be hope.'*

Tears were welling up in my eyes, and I was trying to hold them back.

I became determined while we were walking down the street. I believed there was hope, and I chuckled as the two of us continued on our date while "holding" hands. I was forcing myself to be happy by having fun daydreams.

Lore-wise, Lee Ki-Yeon was strong regardless of her trials and tribulations, and I had to act that way right now.

“Come to think of it, have you heard of the Rainbow Cotton Candy?” Elias asked.

“*Huh?* I heard of it before…” I answered.

“It’s famous for being the favorite dessert of the Democratic Country's Honorary Cardinal. I heard it’s only sold on the famous streets of Lindel, but it looks like they've started selling them in Laves,” he explained.

*‘I actually want to stop eating cotton candy, damn it. I really didn’t expect this. Everyone is talking about cotton candy.’*

“What… flavor is this?” I asked.

“Do you like it?” Elias asked.

“It’s delicious. It’s really delicious,” I replied.

*‘And I’m tired of it, damn it.’*

“Come to think of it, do you watch movies often?” I asked as we ate our Rainbow Cotton Candy.

“No, I don’t really watch movies, but I heard that *How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves* has gotten really popular among the young elves these days. No, it’s actually popular all over the continent—*Ah!* What about you, Miss Ki-Yeon?” he asked.

“I prefer plays more than movies. Whenever I watch plays, it feels like I'm working together with them, and I'm one of the actors…” I answered.

“That’s a relief,” Elias mumbled.

“What?”

“I heard there’s a popular play today,” Elias answered.

“*Oh*, really?” I asked.

“Yes.”

We headed to the theater while talking about our hobbies.

*‘Not bad, but it’s kind of historically wrong.’*

The play was about the Sunset Swordsman's awakening during the 27th Legion Summoning.

The play was titled *"Sunset of the Two People."*

I wasn’t sure if they had been funded to do this, but it was a story about the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild's attempts to awaken the sleeping guild master, who retreated into the deepest recesses of his mind.

It was a touching story depicting Lee Ki-Young's offer to carry the burden with Kim Hyun-Sung, who was afraid of responsibilities.

It looked like they had reimagined that touching story, and they had to have received a lot of funds because the production quality was pretty high.

*“Damn it… damn it! Don’t imitate him! Don’t imitate him, damn it! Don’t show up to me looking like that, and don't force me to take responsibility! Don’t force me to take on those burdens.*

*"I never said I wanted to start over again. I never asked to start over again! Leave me alone! Please stop! Leave me alone! Stop trying to make me take responsibility, you bastard! Don’t… force the responsibility on me! Damn it! Damn it!”*

“…”

*“Please stop… please… please don’t put those burdens on me while looking like him…”*

He had actually uttered those words, and now that I thought about it, he had truly improved immensely. Actually, he was practically cured of his illness.

*“No one has ever told you to take responsibility, and no one has any right to tell you that. I understand that people’s expectations can feel a bit burdensome sometimes and that it’s difficult to endure things when they’re too heavy to bear. There’s no need to feel stressed all by yourself. We can carry the weight together.”*

“…”

*“I’ll help you carry the burden.”*

These lines were almost the same, and they were pretty aggressive with the production.

Lonovera's production at the time wasn't bad, but there were special effects made out of mana for this production, so I could see the radiant sunset on the stage.

The audience members sitting with us stared agape.

*'The actor isn't as handsome, so it's a shame.'*

* * *

"That was so entertaining; I think it's because it was based on a real event. I've heard of the 27th Legion Summoning incident so many times before, but I had no idea that something like that had actually happened.

"Come to think of it, haven't you met those two?" I asked.

"I've met them, but not privately. Of course, we do meet occasionally in public. Of course, we don't meet often…" Elias added.

"What are they like?" I asked.

"*Hm*… the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild is a man of deep faith, worthy of his title as a saint. He always thinks about others before himself, and he is extremely considerate. He's also *very* delicate. There were times when he was so unstable that I thought he was going to collapse.

"However, he becomes stronger than anyone else during a crucial moment," he answered.

*'He's nice. I kind of like him.'*

"What about the guild master?" I asked.

"It's hard to describe him. There's something…" Elias paused.

“What?”

“I don’t know if I should tell you this… but I feel like he’s no different from ordinary humans,” Elias continued.

“That’s…”

“Sometimes… I think about how glad I am that he has the sub guild master. It’s my first time telling someone this… but the Guild Master of the Blue Guild can become the Sunset Swordsman—a hero, in other words, but he can also turn into evil.

"If it hadn't been for the honorary cardinal, I'm sure he would have turned into a slaughterer instead of a hero…” Elias explained.

“Hey… no way,” I commented.

*‘This jerk is hopeless.’*

Anyway, we experienced many things while talking about many topics. We walked on long trails and sat quietly in a high place while looking over the city. We also visited an art gallery where we admired and talked about the work of the elves and other races.

“This artist is still active,” Elias informed me.

“What? But this was… created two hundred years ago—*Ah*, right,” I said.

There were many things we could do in the city, but he was considerate of me because he planned many quiet activities for us to do.

“*Ah,* that’s pretty.” I pointed out.

“I’ll buy it for you,” Elias offered.

“No, it’s fine. If you do that, it makes it seem like I’m begging you to buy it for me…” I told him.

“It’s fine. I just really want to… buy it for you,” Elias said.

“Then… you don’t mind if I accept your gift?” I asked.

“I don’t mind,” Elias answered.

“Then I’ll give you this,” I said.

We stopped by the shopping center and looked around. When it was time to eat again, we went to a decent restaurant and drank wine. When we became tipsy, we had an honest, heart-to-heart conversation. It was a picture-perfect date.

“This day feels so short,” I commented.

This day was actually really long.

*‘It’s because there are many things I have to do.’*

At this point, this was work rather than a vacation. My idea of a vacation was spending time doing nothing but reading. However, I had no choice but to do something else, as our plan was already underway.

“You think so?” Elias asked.

“Yes. Maybe it’s because I'm with you, but a day normally feels *really* long for me. It’s like that whenever I’m working and sleeping as well as whenever I’m alone. Today… felt really short,” I answered.

“…”

“Our time together… felt so short. Really. I can’t believe how short it was… Maybe that’s why I feel even sadder,” I added.

“Miss Ki-Yeon…”

This was the end of our happy and dream-like day.

I touched the ruby-colored wine glass and smiled bitterly at the realization. Of course, Elias wasn't all that different. He seemed nervous, but he looked like he wanted to end this once and for all.

It was time.

"Miss Ki-Yeon, I have something to tell you," Elias said.

"…"

"You see…" Elias paused.

"…"

"Well… *Whoo…* So…" Elias mumbled.

"You don't have to tell me," I told him.

"What?"

"…"

"…"

"I already knew," I said.

"…"

"Whenever we were together, you always seemed like you were thinking… about someone else, Mr. Elias. I'm kind of quick-witted," I explained.

"…"

"It's funny, right? I clearly told you that I didn't want to become a mere replacement, but now, I don't mind being a replacement at all. We've only met a few times, and we're just acquaintances, so… I must be out of my mind," I said.

“I’m sorry,” Elias said.

“You don’t need to apologize. This was bound to happen. I was being… kind of… greedy because I've been holding onto you despite knowing the truth. Actually, I knew you'd be surprised, and I kind of went too far, but…” I paused.

“…”

“But I didn’t want to miss this opportunity. No, I couldn’t miss out on this opportunity. I wasn’t lying about the red thread of destiny. I truly believe that a string of fate connects you and me. I believe it… even now…” I continued.

“I believe it as well, but Miss Ki-Yeon. Please listen to me. Did Elune—”

Start crying!

“Please don't make me feel miserable any longer,” I interrupted him.

“…”

Tears were flowing down my face, and I was feeling desperate.

The scene was so perfect that even I thought that it was the work of an artisan—that was how perfect it was. It hadn't even been twenty-four hours since we met, but the separation of lovers connected by the red string of fate was like the separation of a couple who had spent an eternity together.

“It was really fun,” I said, smiling as if everything was okay.

I was crying, but there was a small smile on my lips. Elias instinctively stretched out his hand toward me, but I moved his hand away and disappeared into the lights of Laves—the City of Dreams.

Just then, I heard an unfamiliar voice.

[You’re ready, my child.]

“W-Who… are you?” I asked.

[God of Sacrifice and Revival, this is Gela.]

“No. Immerse yourself in your own role. I need to send this to noona,” I replied.

[I-I’m sorry.]

“Who… Who are you? What… is this?” I questioned.

[I-I-I’m—*Cough*… I'm the deepest darkness inside you.]

*‘That's a voice crack… ’*

“…”

[I’m the darkness in your abyss.]

# CHAPTER 1057
# PICNIC (20)

Perhaps she was going crazy out of stress, but she kept hearing this strange voice.

However, the voice was so clear and ominous to even think that she was going crazy. In addition, it was written in Lee Ki-Yeon's lore that it wasn't her first time hearing that voice.

When she first arrived on the continent, she recalled hearing Elune's voice, but this was clearly different from back then. Unlike before, when the voice made her feel warm and cozy, the voice she was hearing right now sounded cold and dark, like the desert night.

*'O Elune.'*

It was the first time she uttered Elune's name upon leaving the temple, but Elune's voice became unclear in her memories. Someone's sweet voice was whispering into her, and it was taking advantage of her anxiety and desperation.

[You don't need to reject it, my child.]

"Who… who are you? Why in the world…" she questioned.

[I've been waiting for this day for a very long time. Yes, a *very* long time.]

"Stop…" she mumbled.

[Don't be afraid. I'm the one who understands you the most, and I've been the closest to you.]

How could she not be scared? Her face turned pale, and she took out her

hand mirror.

*'Someone… help me.'*

She was moving instinctively. This wasn't something she could handle on her own. She couldn't really speak properly, as it felt like Death was right in front of her.

It felt like the darkness of the abyss was choking her, and at the same time, it felt like the darkness deep in her heart was spreading deep inside her. Who wouldn't need another person's help in a situation like this?

However…

*'Who… '*

Who was she supposed to ask for help? Was there anyone who could come here right now? No, was there even anyone on this continent capable of helping her?

Based on the story, Lee Ji-Hoo had betrayed Lee Ki-Yeon, and Elias had also turned his back on her. She also didn't have the contact details of The Blue Guild's guild master, as their relationship had ended a long time ago.

Her friends and comrades were no more; the short relationships she made with the people at the Rift Museum and the people of the Friendship Clan were all over.

Lee Ki-Yeon was alone in this vast continent. She looked around awkwardly, but there was no one who could help her. She stretched out her hand as if asking for help, but there was no one looking at her.

"H-Help… someone…" she muttered.

"What?"

"Help m—"

“What the? Is she… drunk?”

“*Kgh… cough…*”

“She’s… giving me the creeps…”

Ha Yeon-Soo appeared briefly as an extra, and she quickly turned around to leave as if she had stumbled upon someone creepy. From the perspective of the nameless extra, Lee Ki-Yeon wasn't someone approachable.

Her makeup was smudged, and she staggered as she walked amidst the rain that had suddenly fallen upon the desert.

She was simply unlucky.

She had stumbled upon a tourist, but they hated getting involved with other people and the strange Lee Ki-Yeon was no exception.

If Lee Ki-Yeon had been just a bit lucky, she would have met someone else and received their help. Then, she would be able to overcome the darkness as always. This incident wasn't exactly that big of a deal, but it was probably the deciding factor.

*‘Ah… I’m alone.’* Lee Ki-Yeon thought.

“I’m… alone. *Heuk!"* Lee Ki-Yeon cried.

“…”

“I’m… really… alone… now… *heuk… heuuuk!*” she repeated.

“…”

“I… really have… nothing now,” Lee Ki-Yeon said.

No one wanted Lee Ki-Yeon.

*‘I feel like crying.’*

[That's right, my lovely child. You're alone. No one wants you. No one truly cares about you.]

"…"

[You poor child. You pitiful child. My seed.]

"*Heuk… heuuuk…"* Lee Ki-Yeon cried.

[The small spark inside of you is disappearing.]

"…"

[The spark of hope inside you that didn't seem like it would go out… is starting to disappear. Child, take my hand. If you want to protect the spark inside you, take my hand.]

"…"

[Leave everything to me and rest now.]

"Rest…" she mumbled.

[No one may want you, but I need you. The power, the darkness, and the small spark that is still inside you… I need them all. I need everything you possess.]

"Okay…" Lee Ki-Yeon answered.

[Come into my arms. If you do…]

"If I do…" she repeated.

[If you do, I'll give you the most peaceful rest ever.]

"…"

[I'll give it to you.]

*Shwaaa!*

*Rumble!*

She heard strange noises that lasted only for a few seconds. Then, someone clapped, and the noises stopped. Everything had come to a halt as if time itself had stopped.

No, time *didn't* stop, as the raindrops in the air were still falling to the ground. Through the raindrops, Lee Ki-Yeon saw her reflection. To be exact, she was Gela hugging her tightly from behind.

*Clap!*

She couldn’t see anything anymore, and jet-black rain… started falling from the sky.

*Shwaaa!*

*‘She went a little overboard with the production.’*

*Shwaaa!*

*‘I wonder if this was really necessary. It’s not bad because it’s a classic cliche, but this is just too much.’*

Ji-Hye noona and I were the types of people who believed that there was always a shortcut, but this was a bit too much. The fact that they hadn't told me about all this was incredibly effective. Red rain was the standard, but black rain was just as ominous.

As expected, I heard confused voices from everywhere.

“What the…”

“What is this…”

“What’s… going on all of a sudden…”

“Is someone playing a joke right now?”

“Or is an event being held at Laves right now?”

“Damn it… this is really bad luck… Is this really only happening in Laves?”

“What the hell? The radio suddenly stopped… working… Hey, someone connect me to the situation room!”

“They’ll send a disaster text soon. This isn’t the first time we’ve experienced a strange phenomenon like this on the continent.

"I heard green rain had fallen a few years ago at a kingdom bordering the Union. It probably happened because the continent was still a dungeon at the time.”

“It’s been a while since the dungeon here was cleared… We should do a separate investigation.”

“*Ah!* I got a reply, sir. They ordered us to gather because they decided to dispatch the Investigation Committee.”

“Is this an emergency?”

“No, I don’t think so… That wasn’t the impression that I got. The Red Goddess of War… didn’t really show… any reaction. She just said there's probably an issue with the climate control system, but we have to group up just in case.”

“Then we should group up.”

Those invited to Laves and the members of the races in the Administration Committee headed toward the shelter. Everyone seemed to be convinced that there was something wrong with the climate control system, as they weren't all that nervous.

However, there was one elf whose thoughts seemed to be drastically different compared to the others.

*'Elias.'*

He was tapping nonstop on his hand mirror; he looked both nervous and anxious.

"Miss Ki-Yeon? Can you hear me, Miss Ki-Yeon?" Elias asked.

*'He must have realized just how serious the situation is.'*

"Miss Ki-Yeon, it's Elias. Miss Ki-Yeon? Where are you right now? I'll look for you right now. There are things I still haven't told you…" Elias said.

*'If you break Ki-Yeon's heart, it'll be the end for the continent.'*

He had decided not to ignore Elune's warning.

*'The red thread is scary.'*

Who could have known that this would happen all of a sudden? On the first day he met Lee Ki-Yeon, Elias received a divine message, and there was a misunderstanding immediately afterward.

Within six hours, we confirmed each other's feelings. Upon confirming that there was a red thread connecting us together, we got even closer, but it all happened in just two days.

We broke up less than twenty-four hours after we became a couple.

I[1] couldn't see him, so I assumed the prelude to the destruction of the continent was about to happen.

It all happened in just four days, so it was not strange that Elias couldn't keep up with me. In addition, the way the elves perceived time was drastically different compared to how humans perceived time.

*‘But even I think that things are happening pretty fast.’*

If it hadn't been for the passionate emotions between us, our relationship would have ended so much faster that anyone would think that it was forced.

Even if Elias were a human being, he wouldn’t be able to keep up with this pace, so he was struggling to keep up with the changes. The anxiousness gnawing away at him urged him to call me. He realized that he had made a mistake as he stood there, stewing in his own anxiety.

“Elena, are you… No, I’ll head there,” Elias said.

Just as I expected, Elias frowned deeply. Not only was he worried about the continent, but he was also worried about Lee Ki-Yeon, the woman he had lost contact with at some point.

“Where… are you?” Elias questioned.

Jo Hye-Jin appeared in front of him, but the problem was that she was with another man.

“Mr. Elias?” Jo Hye-Jin greeted him.

“Miss Hye-Jin,” he said.

“Who is this, Miss Hye-Jin?” the man asked.

“Let me introduce him to you, Mr. Ji-Hoo. He's Mr. Elias, the leader of the Everia Kingdom and the Union of Other Races—”

“Wait… Miss Hye-Jin. Have you… seen the person I was with two days ago?” Elias asked, interrupting her.

“What? Who are you referring to…” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“I’ll keep it short,” he said.

His explanation was short and fast. He told her about his first meeting with Lee Ki-Yeon, their breakup, the divine message he had received from Elune related to the destruction of the continent, and the possible link between this black rain and the woman named Lee Ki-Yeon.

It wasn't something she could just ignore because Jo Hye-Jin received a divine message before. However, what caught my attention more than Jo Hye-Jin's serious expression was Lee Ji-Hoo's frown.

*'Ji-Hye noona is crazy.'*

"Did you just say… Lee Ki-Yeon?" Lee Ji-Hoo asked.

"Yes, but who are—" Elias asked.

Lee Ji-Hoo turned around and bolted, as there was no need for him to listen to Elias' answer. I wasn't sure where he was headed, but he started running away. There was no need for him to explain why he was running, nor was there any reason for him to run.

It was like he was running simply because he wanted to do so.

The scars on his face had transformed him into a monster obsessed with revenge, but it was nothing more than a mask. Based on his lore, his unbroken mask would soon shatter into pieces.

"Ki-Yeon…" Lee Ji-Hoo mumbled.

*'Ji-Hye noona. She's really… she's really a weird one.'*

"Ki-Yeon… Ki-Yeon!" Lee Ji-Hoo roared.

He sounded like he had lost everything—no, he was desperate, as if it were the end of *that* summer.

1. Lee Ki-Yeon's POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1058
# PICNIC (21)

Desert nights were cold, lonely, and long. If one simply thought about it, one would realize that the Laves Desert had always been like this. The nights here were always lonely. It was a sad, dark, and cold desert. It was like a cursed desert that everyone was avoiding.

The desert had become bustling thanks to Laves City, but the desert would always return to its original state as soon as the lights illuminating the city of Laves were turned off.

“It’s chilly,” Kennen commented.

“It feels like something is going to pop up. Don’t you agree, George?” I[1] asked.

“…”

“What’s wrong, George?” he asked.

“It’s just that… I heard something I couldn’t ignore,” George replied.

“What is it now?” I asked.

“…”

“Damn it,” George mumbled and asked, “And what’s wrong with you, Kennen?"

“Damn it, it’s really raining down hard. How unlucky. It’s our first day here, and there’s already black rain… If I had known this was going to happen, I would have changed to a new set of equipment. You tricked me, Alex,” Kennen answered.

“Who’s the one that made a fuss about getting an invitation? Don’t put this on me, Kennen. You really think it's easy to get those invitations? I'm sure you already know, but the Committee only sent out fifty invitations. This isn't a place we can visit just because we want to do so,” I complained.

“Shit…”

“You guys have received the disaster text, right? This is just temporary, and it’ll probably stop within a few hours. It’s just an issue with the climate control system, so I’m sure things will return to normal soon,” I added.

“Do you know how much money I spent on the ticket? How come you're so thoughtless?” Kennen questioned.

“You’re the one who asked me to get them for you! Do you even know how hard it was to get them?” I asked, feeling upset because Kennen was starting to complain.

*‘I shouldn’t have shown off to them.’*

Laves was a fantasy city that the Guild Master of the Blue Guild had built for the honorary cardinal, and there were only fifty invitations to get into the city.

My first mistake was doing well during the first half of the year. My second mistake was getting a ticket along with a bonus and then showing them off to these guys because I was too happy and drunk.

My third mistake was agreeing to take them with me.

*‘These guys are like my enemies.’*

Obviously, I couldn’t take them with me just because I wanted to do so. Not only was it hard to find people willing to sell their tickets, but a ticket couldn't guarantee entry into the city. Playboy Kennen and Third-Rate Gambler George only managed to enter the city because they participated in all the continental wars so far.

The logs alone told everyone that they were on the honorary cardinal's side, and I was sure the higher-ups were aware of the fact that people were selling their tickets, but they had decided to turn a blind eye to it.

*'Well... they're his fans.'*

Regardless of what anyone was going to say, Kennen and I were followers of the honorary cardinal. We were pretty good cases among those who wanted to work with him and walk on the same earth as him.

Actually, the fact that we were here was the biggest proof that we were his fans.

"I don't see Father Lee Ki-Young anywhere… I thought I would at least see Miss Dialuria or some of the members of the Blue Guild. I can't believe we're stuck staring at a black rain all day…" Kennen complained.

"We still have a lot of time, Kennen," I reassured him.

"If they close Laves, will we get our refunds?" he asked.

"Those tickets weren't supposed to be sold in the first place, Kennen. Don't say things like that. You bought a scalped ticket, so why are you asking for a refund? Do you want me to die?" I questioned.

"I mean, I know that… but it's too different from what I thought…" he mumbled.

"You're the one who's been kicking up a fuss, damn it," I reminded him.

"Who knew it would rain just hours after our arrival here?" he remarked.

"It'll stop raining tomorrow. Think about it. Do you really think that the Guild Master of the Blue Guild will just stand by and watch? Ominous black rain is falling on the city that he had built for the honorary cardinal. He'll definitely find a way to make the rain stop. Let's just wait quietly," I told him.

And that was when the quiet George chimed in. “I don’t know about that.”

“…”

“…”

“I don’t think it’s raining because there’s something wrong with the climate control system,” George continued.

“What?”

“I happened to see Mr. Elias of the Union of Other Races and Miss Jo Hye-Jin of the Blue Guild talking to each other,” George replied.

“Miss Jo Hye-Jin is here?” I asked.

“There was another man… but I think he disappeared somewhere…” George added.

“Don’t make me laugh, George. How did you even manage to break down their barri—*Ah!*” I yelled. I had just remembered the fact that Third-Rate Gambler George knew how to read lips. He had learned lip-reading out of the blue, thinking that it would help him with his gambling someday.

At that time, I told him it was useless, but…

“Is this something we can talk about here?” I asked.

“I don’t know if I should tell you this…” George replied.

“Wait, is there something wrong? Are you really sure about that?” I asked.

“Let’s head outside for now,” George suggested.

“Follow us, Kennen,” I said, gesturing to Kennen.

*‘Is he saying that this isn't just an issue with the climate control system?’*

If that were the case, there wouldn’t be a reason for us to go outside. We could not let ourselves get captured by the first-class adventurers here. The official announcement stated that the black rain was due to an issue with the climate control system, but if that weren't the case, then the higher-ups were trying to hide the truth from everyone.

*‘If we say the wrong thing… ’*

I followed George's line of sight and saw Elias of the Union of Other Races and Jo Hye-Jin of the Blue Guild. I also couldn’t help but look at them. Elias was mumbling something with a serious face, and the Blue Guild’s God of Spear nodded at him.

Third-Rate Gambler George walked through the black rain without saying a word. He remained silent even after walking past Elias and Jo Hye-Jin.

“What’s going on, George?” Kennen asked.

“I think something happened,” George answered.

“That’s why I’m asking what’s going on,” Kennen repeated.

“I couldn't deduce the details, but I heard them talking about the destruction of the continent. A divine message from Elune and something about a woman. Do you guys believe in destiny?” George asked.

“What… do you mean?” I asked.

“You know, like a calling we’re given at birth. To put it simply, I’ll use Father Lee Ki-Young as an example. He was born to love everything on the continent. He was born to forgive and to sacrifice everything for the continent. That is his destiny.

"I can also use the Guild Master of the Blue Guild as an example because, just like the God of Sunset, we could have been born *for* someone or something,” George explained.

“So you’re saying…”

George calmly told us about a woman with uncontrollable powers, a woman born with a burdensome destiny that was forced on her by other people. There was a high chance that the woman was the reason behind this bizarre phenomenon.

“What kind of nonsense is that?” Kennen questioned.

“No, it’s not nonsense at all, Kennen,” I told him.

“What did you say, Alex?” Kennen asked.

“Think about all the things that have happened on the continent so far. It’s not that strange at all, especially if you think about Father Lee Ki-Young… I wouldn’t be surprised if there were one or two people who have been chosen or have been abandoned by transcendent beings.

"Anyway, where are we going right now, George?” I asked.

“Have you guys heard of Gela, the evil god of the Desert?” George asked.

“I have, but—”

"Legend has it that Gela and Sahaga, the god of the Desert Elves, met and parted ways during a rainy day in the Laves Desert. There was a passage written in a book I got from a bet with a Lizardman who’s crazy about gambling,” George interrupted me.

“…”

“On the day Gela descends, black rain will fall on Laves,” George continued.

“…”

“The black rain will reduce all living beings on the continent to ashes, and the continent will inevitably turn black,” George added.

“The woman you mentioned earlier is she…” Kennen paused.

“Is she Evil God Gela?” I asked, finishing Kennen's sentence.

George nodded quietly as we walked through the black rain. Obviously, we had no idea where we were heading, but George's answer made Kennen stay quiet as he followed George. He was aware of it as well.

*‘George… is acting up again.’*

Out of the three of us, George was the most immature, and he was crazy enough to gamble away all his savings, but there were times when he acted *this* way.

There were times when he'd start moving by instinct, and he would have this face that seemed to transcend all worldly things. He looked as if he was sober instead of his usual face, and he'd say things we couldn’t understand at all.

He told us that it was a gambler’s intuition, but…

*‘We only survived this far because of that gambler's intuition of his… ’*

At the very least, we wouldn't lose everything by listening to him.

Eventually, we started running, and the desert around us got darker and darker the farther we ran. It felt like the black rain was getting stronger as it poured down on Laves.

At the same time, it was like we were running through a black typhoon.

The desert sand, soaked by the black rain, became like a swamp, making it difficult for us to move our feet.

I was curious whether George knew where we were going or not, but I couldn't do anything other than nod. We were heading deeper, and the surroundings were getting darker. We were running as if we were searching

for light in a dark cave.

When we reached the end of the darkness, we saw a calm clearing that resembled the eye of a storm.

*'Have we somehow found ourselves in a different world?'*

All we did was take one step forward, but it felt like we had stepped into a completely different world. It was still dark, but this clearing had neither black rain nor sand. It felt like we were in the middle of a calm and placid lake.

The skies were dark; the earth was dark, and there was a woman standing quietly at the end of it. The woman had mesmerizing eyes that looked as if it could suck everything into it.

Despite having pale skin and lips, her beauty seemed to be overflowing with life. She was as alive as she was dead. Her deep eyes were so dark that it seemed like they couldn't reflect anything. They looked like the black rain that was falling outside.

Her eyes were completely black. If there were darkness opposing Father Lee Ki-Young's light, then it would probably look like her eyes.

Her eyes represented the purest form of darkness. If that woman weren't trapped in ashen ice, I would turn around and run away. Kennen and George were at a loss for words, and they looked at the being in front of them with their mouths agape.

"Kennen… am I… dreaming right now?" I asked.

"That's what… I wanted to ask, Alex…" Kennen answered.

"Why… why are we here in the first place? Hey, George. Why did you bring us all the way out here?" I asked.

"I don't know either. I just…" George paused.

“Just?”

“I just ran wherever my feet took me,” George continued.

“You… crazy bastard…” I mumbled.

I decided not to trust George again.

* * *

*‘But who the hell are these guys? Why are they here?’*

[God of Sacrifice and Revival, they are…]

*‘Gela? They’re… ’*

[They’re uninvited guests. What should we do…]

*‘I*[2] *don’t know either, noona. Did you invite them?’*

* * *

“Ki-Yeon… Ki-Yeon!”

* * *

*‘Noona, there are strange guys here, damn it… ’*

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1. Alex’s POV ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1059
# PICNIC (22)

"Ki-Yeon… Lee Ki-Yeon! Where are you?! Lee Ki-Yeon!"

"Where are you, damn it?! Lee Ki-Yeon! Can’t you hear me?!"

Ji-Hye noona was so immersed that she hadn't noticed them.

There was regret written all over her face.

Lee Ji-Hoo, whose mask had been destroyed, was frowning. He no longer looked like the crazy revenger at the time. Based on his lore, the reason he was acting that way was that he had lost someone precious to him.

He cared the most about Lee Ki-Yeon, and the reason he abandoned the woman he cared about more than his family was to protect her.

Although the story and character lore were a bit old-fashioned, it was surprising to see her perform such a perfect act that suited the story, which everyone loved.

*‘She must be crazy.’*

Still, I couldn’t help but think that it was too much.

"Lee Ki-Yeon… Ki-Yeon! Noona… please… noona!" Lee Ji-Hoo was yelling out his beloved's name in the middle of the desert, and black rain was falling down on him.

I wouldn’t be surprised if the romantic ended up crumbling down upon realizing what was important to him. He was desperate, and he'd sometimes fall to the ground while running around aimlessly.

He looked like a madman as he ran without any destination in mind.

He was *that* desperate.

True love had extinguished his burning quest for vengeance. He regretted his decision, and he worried about losing someone important to him again.

At some point, he started chasing after the love he truly cherished more than his personal quest for vengeance.

*'That's not the problem here. How did these guys even get in here?'*

[God of Sacrifice and Revival… they…]

*'How did they find this place in the first place?'*

The three extras were standing awkwardly on the stage. One of them even looked so out of place that I questioned how he got invited to Laves in the first place.

Based on the continent's standards, their stats were good enough for them to be called high-ranking adventurers, but they were nothing more than ordinary members of a major or mid-sized guild.

The lack of control over Laves had led these actors to this stage.

Basically, the play had suddenly changed into one that had audience participation.

"So… what do we do now, Alex? Can we just go back? Shouldn't we notify the Continental Protection Management Committee or maybe the Blue Guild?" Kennen asked.

"I think that's the best option, but…" Alex paused.

*'No, don't do that. Don't notify them. Things will get complicated if they find out. Things aren't actually* that *bad here.'*

“There’s nothing we can do on our own. If this black rain is falling right now because of that goddess, then we can't do anything about it. We’re just ordinary guys, Alex. It’s also just a coincidence that we reached this place in the first place,” Kennen said.

“…”

“This isn’t something we can take care of on our own. Damn it, the communication channel isn’t working. Let’s head out for now. I have a bad feeling about this place.

"What do you think, Alex? What about the emergency channel of the Continental Protection Management Committee? Shouldn’t that still work?” Kennen asked.

“I’m actually connecting to it right now,” Alex answered.

“Why did we even come here in the first place?” Kennen complained.

“There’s no such thing as a coincidence in this world, Kennen,” George chimed in.

“George? What are you talking about?” he asked.

“How can you say that we reached this place by chance? Everyone has their own role to play. Everything is connected. You may not realize it… but it’s possible that destiny has led us here,” George answered.

*‘What the hell are you talking about, damn it? I never summoned guys like you.’*

However, I couldn’t help but nod, as assigning them roles was the most reasonable thing to do here. They were now part of the play, after all. That was probably the reason Ji-Hye noona hadn't bothered to make any comments about them.

*‘I think she’s telling me to give them roles.’*

As I stared at Lee Ji-Hoo wandering around the streets, I realized what kind of roles would fit them.

[Help.]

“What the heck…” Alex mumbled.

[Help…]

“Did you hear that, Kennen?” Alex asked.

[Please… help.]

“I-Is it you? So… I mean… the goddess… I mean, angel—no, I mean… What do I call you… A demon… No, not a demon…” Alex muttered.

[Please… help.]

“P-Please hold on a moment. I was actually going to submit a rescue request…” Alex said.

*‘No, don’t do that… ’’*

[Please… help him.]

I was sure scenes were popping up in their heads.

They could see Lee Ji-Hoo, a man desperately running across the desert beneath the pitch-black rain. He was crying while running for his life. I wasn’t sure how, but Lee Ki-Yeon was aware that Lee Ji-Hoo was coming this way.

She still felt betrayed and disappointed, but she also hoped for him to be safe and happy.

[Only… you three can do it, Guides of the Desert.]

*‘Guides of the Desert. It has a nice ring to it.’*

“Did you… lead us here? Can you explain this situation to us right now?” George asked.

*‘I don’t know, man. How should I know how you guys ended up here?’*

“If you’re really the one who caused this black rain… please don’t be nervous. The honorary cardinal will be here soon. He’ll rescue you soon. If you hold out just a little longer…” George said.

*‘I’m the honorary cardinal, and I’m not going here.’*

[No, this is your role. Please… before this power grows stronger…]

“…”

[Please help him.]

“…”

[While I’m still myself… take him… to a safe place…]

“…”

[*Heuk… heuuuk… heuk…* no. I… that’s not…]

“…”

[Hurry! As soon as possible—Hurry! I can no longer…]

The participants exchanged dumbfounded gazes.

[Sahaga… Find Sagaha’s gift.]

Upon realizing the severity of the situation, they turned around and ran toward the exit.

“Damn it… what the hell is going on? George, were you aware of this?” Alex asked.

“This is—”

“Kennen, how is it? Think you can find it?” Alex asked, interrupting George.

“It’s hard. Asking us to find a person in this large area… Even a skilled ranger will have a hard time doing that, so how am I supposed to pull that off? I’m just an ordinary warrior,” Kennen answered.

“It’s not like we don’t have any hints. The closer we get to that place, the heavier the rain becomes. If the scenes in our heads are real…” George trailed off.

“If you think about it that way… then he’s probably within three kilometers from this place. It would be easier to find him if there were a landmark or anything else. Anyway, who was that man? And why was she… Has Gela really possessed her? Hey, George, am I right?” Kennen asked.

“…”

“That’s none of our business, Kennen. Just focusing on our role is hard enough. One thing I’m sure of is that we need to help her. I can’t believe we’re doing this during our vacation…” Alex complained.

“Damn it… there’s always trouble whenever I hang out with you guys,” Alex added.

I saw the audience members moving quickly while chatting. It sure was difficult to track down Lee Ji-Hoo in the middle of such a vast desert using only the scenes I had briefly revealed to them, but they were doing better than I had expected.

They were moving based on those fragmented scenes.

And that was when black beasts rose up in the middle of the tempest…

“Kennen?” Alex said.

“I see it as well, Alex. It’s a good thing I brought my equipment. Prepare for battle, George,” Kennen said.

“Got it.”

*‘The participants aren’t that bad.’*

It was like watching an adventure movie. It had been a while since I saw such scenes, and the sight of it put me in a good mood…

“Break through them! They’re not that strong!” Kennen shouted.

“But I think they’re getting stronger…” George pointed out.

“Doesn’t it seem like their stats are increasing beneath this black rain? We can deal with them right now, but we’ll need the Blue Guild to help us a few hours later. We need to break through them as fast as possible, Kennen. I know it’s going to be difficult, but I’m going to need you to fight harder than usual!” Alex requested.

“Damn it. *Ahhhhhhhh!* Take this! Y-You bastards of the goddess!” Kennen yelled.

The plan was to circle around the eye of the storm to find Lee Ji-Hoo, but it was nearly impossible to achieve. Even if they somehow managed to do it, they wouldn’t be able to find Lee Ji-Hoo, as he was constantly on the move. Thus, Gela had decided to summon these black beasts.

*"We just need to change their directions little by little.’*

We had to control the beasts so that they wouldn't notice that we were manipulating their movements.

“Break through them!” Kennen shouted.

“Run, Kennen!” Alex yelled.

“Just follow me, George! You’re watching behind us, right?” Alex asked.

“Don’t worry,” George answered.

“*Aaaargh!* Die already, you monsters! They’re not monsters we can kill in the first place! All we can do is slow them down!” Kennen yelled.

Their breathing was becoming heavier and heavier, but the audience members, who were swinging their swords at the beasts beneath the black rain, had no luxury to think about that.

They were fighting fiercely against the beasts, and the terrain was changing in real time due to the black rain. They had no idea whether they were taking the right path or not, and they also had no idea where they were going.

Just as they felt like they were approaching their limits, they finally saw hope.

“Noona… noona!” Lee Ji-Hoo shouted.

“Alex, do you see that?!” Kennen asked.

“I see it!” Alex answered.

“Damn it! It's those beasts! Faster!” Kennen shouted.

The Guides of the Desert carved a path in the middle of the tempest and finally encountered the man who had crossed the desert for a woman.

“Who… are you guys?” Lee Ji-Hoo asked.

“We don’t have time to explain. W-We don’t really know what's going on, but we’re here to take you to a safe place,” Alex replied.

“What… kind of nonsense is that…” Lee Ji-Hoo mumbled.

“It’s true,” George said.

"…"

"…"

"Who sent you?" Lee Ji-Hoo asked.

"It's the goddess who created this black rain. We don't exactly know her identity, but… as the Guides of the Desert—"

"Lee Ki-Yeon…?" Lee Ji-Hoo interrupted George.

"Excuse me?"

"W-Where is she?" Lee Ji-Hoo asked.

"…"

"I'm asking where she is right now?!" Lee Ki-Hoo yelled.

"We don't have time for this, Alex! Damn it! The beasts are coming! We should knock him out and take him away!" Kennen suggested.

"Do you know her well?" Alex asked.

"Take me to her. Please… I'll pay you as much money as you want…" Lee Ji-Hoo begged.

"I don't think we're going to get through him. Alex! Let's stop talking and—"

"Shut up, Kennen," Alex interrupted.

"What's wrong with you?" Kennen asked.

"I know this is going to sound crazy…" Alex paused.

"What is it?" Kennen asked.

"But I think we should take this man to *that* place," Alex suggested.

It wasn't crazy. It was just a suggestion.

I looked away from them and turned…

“Miss Ki-Yeon?”

I saw the first guest looking at me in a daze.

# CHAPTER 1060
# PICNIC (23)

“Miss Ki-Yeon,” Elias said.

“…”

“Is it really you… Miss Ki-Yeon?” he asked.

*‘For a moment, I thought it was Kim Hyun-Sung, damn it.’*

For some reason, Kim Hyun-Sung would always appear whenever I was Lee Ki-Yeon, so I assumed that he had come here to find me.

I flinched upon hearing a man's voice, but I managed to calm down my racing heart, as it was really obvious that Elias was going to appear instead of Kim Hyun-Sung.

*‘There’s no way Hyun-Sung will come here. He’s busy with other things right now.’*

It was kind of surprising that those three audience members had come first, but it wasn't strange for Elias and Jo Hye-Jin to make their way here so quickly.

I had no idea if he had received help from the desert elves or if he had made his way here using his good sense of direction, but the important thing was that Elias had come here himself.

It felt like he was aware of the fact that the situation was changing rapidly.

“Miss Ki-Yeon…” Elias called out.

“…” “Miss Ki-Yeon, can you hear me?” Elias asked.

*‘The way he talks is really similar to him.’*

“Miss Ki-Yeon… it’s me. Miss Ki-Yeon!” Elias exclaimed.

His depressed voice made me think that he had a similar voice to Kim Hyun-Sung. Of course, their voices were fundamentally different from each other. The old elf’s voice was honeyed, while Kim Hyun-Sung’s voice sounded energizing.

There was a difference in their voices, and it represented their differing personalities.

Elias stepped forward, and the tall elf finally appeared before me.

The elf had long gold hair, and his eyes were slightly intimidating. He clearly looked desperate, unlike his usual indifferent face. He seemed like he could always maintain composure, as he was famous for his poker face, even in important meetings.

*'There are only around twenty-four hours left before the continent's destruction, but what can he do when he's just an ordinary elf?'*

“Miss Ki-Yeon…” Elias mumbled.

I was sure he wasn't making that face just because the continent was about to be destroyed, and the stage wasn’t made for that as well.

This was a quiet space that could only be reached by going through the tempest of black rain. This place, occupied by pitch-darkness, was like Lee Ki-Yeon’s heart.

Lee Ki-Yeon couldn’t feel anything nor did she want to feel anything. She couldn’t feel sadness or fear. Extreme loneliness reigned supreme over this dark space. Ordinary people couldn't feel such emotions, but Elias was an elf.

*‘She’s been suffering.’*

"…"

*"She's been in… so much pain.'*

"…"

*'She's been hiding this darkness behind a cheerful demeanor.'*

"…"

*'Lee Ki-Yeon… is a really lonely person.'*

Anyone who couldn't sympathize with her pain was a psychopath.

Jo Hye-Jin stepped forward and looked around with a pale face.

*'Our Hye-Jin is here as well.'*

I could deduce her thoughts.

*'Our Hye-Jin.'*

She sympathized with Lee Ki-Yeon's pain. This was her first time seeing Lee Ki-Yeon, but it felt like she already knew what kind of life she had been living, the things that had happened to her, and how she had gone through many hardships on this continent.

She automatically knew everything about Lee Ki-Yeon, and she found her pitiful.

Jo Hye-Jin was sympathizing with her loneliness and abandonment. She was at a loss for words, and she looked so heartbroken as she bit her lips. She wasn't crying, but her serious expression told me her feelings.

Jo Hye-Jin probably thought it was too late to save her. Not only did it seem like her heart wasn't beating anymore, but she was also getting consumed by the darkness she couldn't handle.

Jo Hye-Jin had no idea when that darkness would explode. If she were to look for a realistic solution, Lee Ki-Yeon wouldn't survive, but it was probably the best choice. Of course, Hye-Jin wasn't going to consider hurting me. Jo Hye-Jin was always capable of making sound decisions, except for making decisions in a situation like this.

Actually, she was rational more than anyone, but she just couldn't make decisions that were against her principles and beliefs. I was sure that was the reason she refrained from contacting the other guild members.

While examining my condition, Jo Hye-Jin said, "Mr. Elias… I think Miss Ki-Yeon… has already…"

"No, not yet. I can still feel her," Elias argued.

"What?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"I hope it's not my imagination… but… I can definitely feel her. What I see inside is clearly Miss Ki-Yeon," Elias told her.

The red thread of fate.

*'Ah… ahh… '*

Our red thread that would never break.

*'You still… you still… haven't forgotten, Mr. Elias.'*

A red thread connected his finger and my finger. He couldn't sense it under normal circumstances. After all, Elias was mortal, so he wouldn't be able to see the thread tied by the Goddess of Fate. However, miracles often happen in stories, and this was one of those miracles.

The fact that he could see the thread between him and Lee Ki-Yeon meant that Elune had permitted it. Elias could clearly see the thread.

*'You can see it, right? The red thread of fate between him and the woman in*

*danger remains unbroken.'*

*'Sob.'*

Their fate spanned many years, including their present and past lives, and it had never shattered despite the ruthless passage of time.

“She once told me this, Miss Hye-Jin,” Elias said.

“…”

“She told me that there’s a red thread of fate between two people. People who are meant to be together are connected by an invisible red thread from the moment they’re born, and she told me that… that there's a red thread connecting us…” Elias continued.

“…”

“I didn’t believe it at first. Thanks to Elune, I became aware that she and I were born with a strange fate, but I never imagined that it'd really be the red thread of fate. I had no idea that it even existed,” Elias said.

“…”

“B-But… I can see it now. I know it sounds strange, but… I can see the red thread,” Elias added.

“…”

“I can see… that she and I… are connected. I can clearly see our hands being connected by the red thread. I can see it unless I’m going crazy…” Elias paused.

*'You jerk.'*

“No, if you can really see it… then it means the red thread really exists,” Jo Hye-Jin argued.

“I still don’t know how I feel. I confirmed that a red thread connects her and me… but I don’t know if I have feelings for her or if I simply want to deepen my relationship with her. If I were to be honest with my feelings, Miss Jo Hye-Jin, I still…” Elias paused.

*'You’re really a bad guy.'*

“I still like you, Miss Jo Hye-Jin. No, I love you, but…”

Elias couldn’t continue his sentence. If he had any sense of shame, he wouldn’t be able to finish that sentence. He had confessed his love to Jo Hye-Jin and had been following her around. It wasn't the other way around.

How could he tell her about ending his long and passionate courtship, especially when their relationship was just starting to improve?

*‘He’s a coward.’*

Our Hye-Jin deduced Elias' words, and she replied with the words that Elias couldn’t tell her.

“I’m fine, Mr. Elias.”

“…”

“I don’t really know much about this… and I never thought about… the red thread of fate or destiny, but I know one thing. R-Right now… she needs you, Mr. Elias,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“…”

“She needs you, not me. So… don’t worry about me,” she told him.

Jo Hye-Jin’s expression didn’t really change. She seemed kind of disappointed that their relationship was coming to an end, but I was sure I was just imagining that.

At this point, it was probably natural for her to react that way, as she wasn't type to be disappointed in Elias. She also wasn't going to have regrets about losing this relationship. All I could see was her worry about Lee Ki-Yeon, and I could also see that she was hoping that this small incident would have a happy ending.

Jo Hye-Jin expected a happy ending to this story. It wouldn't be *her* happy ending, but it would be the right ending for this story, and she seemed to be praying for this story to go in the right direction.

*'It's his last chance.'*

Elias turned around and looked at Jo Hye-Jin.

He walked up to her and hugged her.

*'You bastard.'*

No, I shouldn't be swearing.

*'Was he always this tenacious?'*

Had Elias decided not to care about the red thread of fate or the destruction of the continent? Had he decided to ignore everything else and live only for Jo Hye-Jin? Had he decided to go against Elune's words? I could see him hugging Jo Hye-Jin even tighter.

"M-Mr. Elias? What… are you…" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

Elias finally said, "I'm sorry."

"…"

"I'm really… sorry," Elias repeated.

*'I'm an idiot for expecting anything.'*

He had always been like this. He was an elf who would surrender to fate ten times out of ten.

“No, you don’t need to apologize, Mr. Elias,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“…”

“It was just bad timing. T-there were times when I seriously considered it, so… I actually feel relieved. Just as I expected, this kind of relationship doesn’t suit me,” Jo Hye-Jin added.

“That’s not—”

"Go, Mr. Elias. I think this is the end of our story. Go write your story with her,” Jo Hye-Jin interrupted him. Then, she lifted her spear.

“…” Elias gulped a mouthful of his own saliva and raised his sword.

Just then, Lee Ki-Yeon, who was being possessed by Gela, opened her eyes. The black beasts then opened their mouths and roared at the invaders. They roared, telling them not to come any closer. Then, they surrounded me as if they were trying to protect me.

“I’ll open up a path,” Jo Hye-Jin offered.

“Okay.”

“Make reaching her your priority, Mr. Elias,” Jo Hye-Jin instructed him.

*‘Our Hye-Jin is so cool.’*

“Come at me, you beasts,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

The Blue Guild’s God of Spear descended.

*‘You’re so cool, Hye-Jin. You’re seeing this as well, right, noona?’*

— Our Hye-Jin is really amazing. Right, Oppa? I think I know why she has

*that* title.

She always breaks the immersion at times like this, but Ji-Hye noona was correct. Jo Hye-Jin wasn't the type to miss her target with her sharp senses.

# CHAPTER 1061
# PICNIC (24)

*‘Jo Hye-Jin really does look cool.’*

She was like an invincible, great warrior.

— Record this, oppa.

*‘She’s really amazing.’*

Jo Hye-Jin summoned the spear she had received from the God of Sacrifice and Revival, signaling the start of the battle.

*"That’s the spear I gave her, noona."*

— I gave her those wrist guards.

The black beasts here were different from the ones that the participants and Lee Ji-Hoo had to fight. They weren't just Rare and Epic monsters. The black beasts trying to protect Lee Ki-Yeon possessed savagery that lived up to them being Gela’s subordinates.

Jo Hye-Jin was fighting and resisting those beasts with just one spear, creating a jaw-dropping sight.

Jo Hye-Jin’s spearmanship was so perfect that the words "one thrust, one kill" were apropros to describe her. Her clean and disciplined thrusts made the beast's head explode, and a single slash from her forced them back.

After creating enough distance, Jo Hye-Jin thrust her spear again, taking down the unfortunate beast that dared to chase after her. The black beast next to the first one ended up having a hole in its head before disappearing into nothingness.

It was like the word "distance" did not exist for her spear, as her spear could reach close and distant targets. Her spear was the most effective at mid-range, but the weapon was reborn as a flawless weapon in her hands.

It was a beautiful and awe-inspiring sight.

Her neatly tied-up hair moved gracefully every time she moved forward, and the beasts before her fell like falling leaves. The sight was so simple yet so impactful that the words "great warrior" were the best way to describe her.

*"I think the difficulty is too low."*

[Th-Then I'll increase the difficulty a little, God of Sacrifice and Revival.]

The black beasts realized that they were in danger and roared.

They merged with each other, creating a brand-new beast, but…

*"Huh? Oh? Hye-Jin is getting hurt. Hye-Jin is getting hurt! She's getting hurt!"*

[I-I'm sorry. I'm sorry, God of Sacrifice and Revival. Right now…]

*'No, no… no. Hye-Jin isn't hurt.'*

She was really close to getting hurt, though. She was barely avoiding their attacks, and upon doing that, she moved in a bizarre way that somehow allowed her to chop off the brand-new beast's head. It was strange. I was sure all she had done was take a few steps, but at some point, she was already on the brand-new beast's back.

"Now! Mr. Elias!" Jo Hye-Jin shouted.

*"Hye-Jin! I'm going to die! I'm really going to die!"*

*'Miss Hye-Jin! I'm dying! I'm dyyying!'*

*'Wooow… '*

— Did you see that?

Of course, she wasn’t the only one fighting. There was an elf moving around in an annoying way. He was fighting hard using the sword techniques of the Elf Kingdom, which suited the fragile elves…

— Oh my, look at him running around.

Anyone could tell that he was like a rearguard.

He wasn’t like Kim Hyun-Sung, who was capable of making his opponents feel dizzy with his quick and agile movements. He was also not like Rafael, who wielded a heavy sword overflowing with magic.

His swordsmanship wasn’t heavy and oppressive like Bahamut’s, whose name had already faded away into obscurity. He wasn’t like the Thronus capable of weaving long-range attacks to exploit his opponent's openings.

Elias' sword technique was needlessly flashy. I wasn’t saying his attacks were weak, but they weren't strong enough to deliver a final blow. His weak attacks were flashy instead of being strong enough to deliver powerful blows during times when he needed to do so.

He also lacked stamina, and I could see him taking short breaks in the middle of the fight, which made me feel frustrated. He was the type of fighter I would never want to fight with.

*‘I just can’t see tactical Elias being useful at all.’*

I really wanted to find something useful about him, but I couldn’t find anything.

I also had no intention of thinking desperately about it to pass the time.

Of course, Elias seemed like he wanted to contribute. If I were to look at his skills alone, it could be said that he was strong and had the basics as well. He knew what he had to do during combat, and he was skillful enough to make

up for his weak points.

I figured I was just a bit too picky, as I had seen many excellent swordsmen.

*'He doesn't have anything that can deliver a decisive blow.'*

— He looks skilled on the outside, but the core of his techniques aren't that great. That must be the elves' traditional sword. Why does it look so weak? It looks fancy, but what use is fanciness in a battle? It's not even powerful, too.

"*Tsk, tsk, tsk.*"

I couldn't help but click my tongue when I saw his movements.

I realized that I stopped hearing Ji-Hye noona's voice at some point, and I figured that she had gotten immersed in her role again as Jo Hye-Jin was starting to become irrelevant to the ongoing situation.

It seemed that Lee Ji-Hye was done appreciating Jo Hye-Jin, so she decided to start focusing on her role. Jo Hye-Jin had also started helping Elias. Their movements had slowed down, but they had become more stable.

Elias started expressing the emotions that he had been hiding until now.

"Miss Ki-Yeon! Can you hear me?" Elias asked.

*'I can hear you.'*

"Miss Ki-Yeon! It's me! I-I'm here," Elias said.

*'I can't focus because he's being so annoying right now.'*

"Miss Ki-Yeon! Can you hear my voice?" Elias asked again.

At this point, I had no choice but to look at him indifferently. His eyes quivered when he saw my ice-cold gaze.

[You fool.]

“You’re…”

[You’re such a fool. You poor, wicked creation of Elune.]

“W-Who… are you?” he asked.

[My name isn’t so insignificant as to be made known to foolish mortals, but today is the day of my rebirth, so I will be considerate. My name is Gela. I'm the Gela you people call the Evil God.]

She was an unimaginable existence. The evil seed inside Lee Ki-Yeon was actually Gela, but it was a turn of events so unimaginable that it seemed forced. However, the actors were so immersed in their roles that they didn't notice anything strange.

“Wh-What happened to her?” Elias asked.

[Her? *Ahh*, you mean the child who became my seed. You don’t have to worry too much. This child is refusing to come out. I don’t think this poor child wants to come out into the world. She’s suffered too much.]

“…”

[She has suffered way too much.]

“That can’t be…” Elias mumbled.

[She doesn’t want to see you get hurt, so return, son of Elune. I’ll at least let you live. Returning you, the one connected to this child by a red thread, to Elune… is bothering me though.]

“…”

[That’s as far as you can come. I will not allow you to get closer to her.]

“That's a lie,” Elias said.

[What's a lie?]

“The Lee Ki-Yeon I know… wouldn’t give up so easily. Even if she’s in pain and even if she collapses, Miss Ki-Yeon will get back on her feet and smile brightly again. Even if she gets hurt, she will never give up,” Elias continued.

He had interpreted my actions well, but his line was so cheesy that I couldn't even comment on it.

*'And how dare you make that kind of judgement when you barely know me?'*

[…]

“Miss Ki-Yeon! Can you hear me? Miss Ki-Yeon!” Elias shouted.

[Your struggle is futile…]

“I-I know now, Miss Ki-Yeon. I can see the red thread you've been talking about. I… also… know how difficult and lonely life your life must've been. I finally understand it,” Elias continued.

[How funny. It’s a funny melodrama.]

“I won’t… I won’t leave you alone anymore. I may be a little late… but I won’t leave you alone this time,” Elias added.

*‘He’s too cheesy.’*

[Do you truly believe she can hear your voice?]

“I’m sure she can hear me,” Elias said.

Goosebumps broke out all over me when he confidently said that he could see the red thread.

This was why people often said that looks were important.

*‘If those words had come out of Kim Hyun-Sung's mouth, it would have become*

*a famous, sad, and heartbreaking line.'*

It was such a princely line that could make people's hearts race, but when it came out of Elias' mouth, it sounded as cringey as a bad dad joke. His clear and desperate gaze looked oversentimental. Instead of an energetic voice typical of *shonen* protagonists, I heard a hushed voice that almost sounded like a whisper.

"I'm sure she's… listening to my voice," Elias said.

[You're overestimating her, Son of Elune.]

My eyes twitched involuntarily because I was so annoyed. I was actually bothered by Elias' every move, so I went all-out, even when moving my hands.

The black beasts roared and charged at the elf.

I was careful not to let Hye-Jin get hurt, but the annoying jerk charged at the beast. It was impressive to see him move forward one step at a time despite having wounds all over him, but at the end of the day, he was still Elias.

Regardless, this was the moment when he expressed his determination to never give up on Lee Ki-Yeon, as he had done with Jo Hye-Jin.

[Your struggles are meaningless.]

"*Whoo… whoo…*"

[Why… aren't you giving up? Just as I expected, Elune's sons truly don't know when to give up.]

"I can reach her," Elias said.

[…]

"I can reach her. This time… I'll surely reach her," Elias said.

[You fool…]

“I’ll reach her next time. Miss Ki-Yeon, I’ll reach you next time…” Elias repeated.

*‘He must think it’s over once he reaches me. Can’t he see that I’m trapped?’*

It was like he was competing against Kim Hyun-Sung, and the competition was about moving forward despite the odds. If he were alone, he'd never reach me, but he was moving with his old crush, who really liked the color blue, and the sight looked more annoying to me than touching.

With many twists and turns that I was too lazy to describe, his hand eventually reached me, and the scenery before me changed rapidly.

A tiny miracle happened once again. The stage was pitch-black. This was Lee Ki-Yeon’s subconscious. I saw Elias standing awkwardly in front of me, similar to when Lee Ki-Young entered Kim Hyun-Sung's subconscious.

“Miss Ki-Yeon…” Elias mumbled.

“*Heuk…”*

“Miss Ki-Yeon… Is that really you… Miss Ki-Yeon?” Elias asked.

*'You're really asking that? If I were not Lee Ki-Yeon, who would I be?'*

“Miss Ki-Yeon… it’s me. It’s Elias,” Elias said.

*'Yeah, I know you’re Elias.'*

“I came to find you,” Elias added.

*'I’m glad you’re here, damn it.'*

“Miss Ki-Yeon?”

*'The time to cut the red thread was nigh, so get ready to get dumped.'*

# CHAPTER 1062
# PICNIC (25)

I was sure it was an unfamiliar space.

The empty space was no different from the outside world, but the world within Lee Ki-Yeon's subconscious had a different atmosphere. Not only was it difficult to differentiate whether it was real or not, but even ordinary people would notice that something was wrong.

The space was quieter, darker, and lonelier. It was a really suffocating and lonely space. I honestly wanted to recreate the scenery of the first life that Kim Hyun-Sung had created and destroyed, but unfortunately, there was an issue with the budget.

*'I was worried because the budget was too low… '*

Elias hadn't noticed anything strange because this was a cheap mise-en-scène that suited him. Of course, the actors' outstanding acting skills made up for the cheap mise-en-scène.

Lee Ki-Yeon was crying while crouching down in the corner of this lonely space. Elias couldn't hear her cries, and Lee Ki-Yeon herself was not expressing her sadness.

However, her slightly trembling shoulders told Elias about her current condition.

Elias staring at her from afar calmed himself down and started walking quietly.

I was sure it was shocking for him to see Lee Ki-Yeon crumble down. After all, she was always happy and seemed like she could endure any ordeals and

loneliness. Perhaps the version he saw was nothing but a facade. She was probably trying to hide her weakness by pretending to be strong, forcing herself to smile, and comforting herself by saying that she could overcome all trials.

Perhaps this was her true self.

Upon realizing the truth, Elias stopped dead in his tracks and was at a loss for words for a while

"…"

"Miss Ki-Yeon… it's me. It's Elias," Elias said.

"…"

"I came to find you, Miss Ki-Yeon," Elias said.

"…"

"Miss Ki-Yeon?" Elias said.

He gathered courage and took a step forward, but he didn't know how or where he ought to start. Perhaps it was just me, but he was hesitating to help his ex-crush. He seemed to have trouble taking a step forward to help his ex-crush.

If it weren't for Hye-Jin, this jerk wouldn't make it this far.

*'He really is a jerk.'*

*'You need to handle this yourself. Why is it taking so long? Can't you see my desperate appearance? Hurry up and come here.'*

"Miss Ki-Yeon," Elias said.

In the end, I had no choice but to play along by raising my head.

Elias was shocked. Not only were my eyes swollen, but my messy face was probably completely different from the last time he saw me, so it was understandable that he'd be shocked. Still, it'd be pretty rude for me if I were to not say anything.

"Mr. Elias?" I said.

"…"

"Is that really you… Mr. Elias?" I asked.

Perhaps he was just an illusion. Perhaps this mysterious space was an illusion created by someone else. I looked at him again with hopeless eyes before staring at his left hand.

*'A red thread.'*

I "saw" the invisible red thread. I could feel it, but the red thread wasn't something I could see with my eyes. I always believed we'd be connected, but I questioned the existence of the red thread. Naturally, I followed the red thread that was tied around my thin finger, and the moment I saw the red thread connected to his finger…

"Mr. Elias?" I asked, smiling faintly.

It wasn't an illusion. Elias was really here.

A thread of fate really did exist between us, and there really was a bond between us that would never break. For Lee Ki-Yeon, who had no one to lean on, the existence of the red thread was more comforting than any words.

It seemed Elias was aware of this as well because he smiled and grabbed the red thread that was connected to his finger.

We were getting closer.

The red thread had never been this close before, and it started pulling us

toward each other. It even shone faintly as if saying that this was our first time meeting each other.

“Yes, it’s me, Miss Ki-Yeon,” Elias answered.

“Is it really… really… you, Mr. Elias?” I asked again.

“Yes,” he replied.

“Are you really… the same Mr. Elias whom I met at Laves?” I asked.

“Yes! It’s me, Miss Ki-Yeon,” Elias yelled.

“*Heuk… heuuk…”* I cried.

“I’m sorry,” Elias said.

“…”

“I’m sorry… for all of this,” Elias said.

“No, it’s nothing you need to apologize for… Mr. Elias. This is—”

“I’m sorry for leaving you alone for so long,” he interrupted me.

“That’s…”

“I’m sorry I didn’t believe you, Miss Ki-Yeon. I’m sorry that it took me too long to realize it,” Elias continued.

“…”

“The fact that a red thread actually exists and that we’re meant to be—no… more importantly… it’s not just those… I managed to confirm my true feelings for you once again, Miss Ki-Yeon,” Elias added.

*‘He’s suddenly rushing it, and what’s with confirming his feelings once again, damn it? When on earth had he realized? He wasn't like this yesterday.’*

“You’re kind, Mr. Elias,” I commented.

“What?”

“You’re really… kind. You really didn’t need to say that…” I told him.

“No, they’re not empty words. I—”

“I’m really thankful… that you came all the way here. It isn’t like me to act like this, right?” I asked.

After saying it was unlike me to act this way, I decided to pick up the pace.

The production cost would increase depending on the length of the film, after all.

“I-I always thought I was alone,” I confessed.

“…”

“Since I was summoned to this continent… I've been thinking that I was alone. Of course, there were a few times when I thought I *wasn’t* alone, but I’ve been unconsciously thinking that way all along.

"M-Maybe that’s why I gave up. I don’t really know what’s going on, but… maybe that’s why I can't escape here,” I continued.

“…”

“I-I tried to overcome it, but it looks like I couldn't do it. I must be being consumed by a negative emotion that has always been inside my heart and has gone unnoticed until now,” I said.

“…”

“Is… there something serious going on outside? Did something big happen in Laves… or Lindel?” I asked.

Elias hesitated, but rather than saying that he was hesitating whether to speak comforting words to me or not, it was more like he was wondering whether I knew the truth or not.

“I know. I don’t know the details, but I have a rough idea of the situation outside even though I’m inside here,” I told him.

“Black rain has been falling… since you came here, Miss Ki-Yeon. We haven’t been able to check whether this phenomenon has been happening in other regions because the external communications have been cut off…” Elias informed me.

“…”

“A pool of black rain creates black beasts. Those beasts grow bigger the longer they stay in the rain. Large, dangerous beasts are rampaging throughout Laves. As if foreshadowing the destruction of the continent, darkness has fallen on Laves, but that’s not why I’m here, Miss Ki-Yeon,” Elias explained.

*‘I knew it. Why is he being guilty? I never asked if that’s why you came.’*

“That’s really… not the only reason. I—”

“You don’t have to be so considerate, Mr. Elias,” I interrupted him.

“…”

“If that’s the case… then it’s certain that there really is something inside me. I thought it was just a dream, but… it was true,” I mumbled.

“…”

“I heard a voice introducing herself as Gela. No, it wasn’t just a voice. I felt her presence… inside me. I tried my best to resist her… but it wasn’t easy. I struggled even as I fell into the darkness. I tried my best to get to the surface, but I felt myself falling into the abyss. I spent a long time spacing out, and I

eventually found myself crying in this place," I explained.

"Are you okay?" Elias asked.

"Yes, I'm… okay now," I answered.

"…"

"Now I know that I'm not alone. That's enough for me," I added.

"…"

Lee Ki-Yeon was a strong woman who wasn't the type to feel lonely, sad, or even cry.

She was the very definition of the word "perseverance," as she would always get back up. She just needed a small push to get out of the darkness, and an example of that was realizing that she wasn't alone; someone could also push her to get back up.

A small push would make her stronger.

*'It was the same for Kim Hyun-Sung.'*

When I told Elias about how I realized the fact that I wasn't alone, he seemed to have interpreted that as my answer toward him, as he walked closer to me again and hugged me.

"It'll be fine now, Miss Ki-Yeon. I came here to save you. I won't leave you alone any longer, especially not in a place like this…" Elias reassured me.

"Thank you," I said.

"…"

"After our short encounter…" I mumbled.

"And… I'm sorry."

“What?”

After stepping back from Elias, I looked at the red thread connecting us. Afterward, I calmly untied the red thread.

Before the shocked Elias could say something…

“Why…”

*‘I don’t know. If I have to give you a reason, it’s because I don’t like you.’*

There was no special reason at all. I had a line prepared for this moment, but there was no need for me to say it, as he would surely make his own interpretations.

He’d realize that something had changed.

He would not understand why, but by untying this red thread, he’d see that I had grown.

My eyes sparkled, and the darkness as well as the solitude within me were replaced by independence and confidence. Lee Ki-Yeon's will wasn't so weak that she had to entrust her life to someone. She also had no reason to relieve her loneliness through someone else.

Instead, Lee Ki-Yeon would carve out her own life and fate using her strong will.

The darkness cleared, and a faint light filled the room. The light became even more dramatic when it shone down on Lee Ki-Yeon. She was standing up, not as someone’s lover or a woman waiting for someone, but for herself.

Lee Ki-Yeon had decided to stand beneath the shining light by herself.

She had decided to stand for herself on this continent.

“Miss Ki-Yeon?” Elias said.

*‘I don’t like you. I don’t like you, damn it.’*

“Yes, Mr. Elias?” I answered.

“Is this…”

“I’m sorry, but…” I paused.

“…”

“I’m sure you understand,” I continued.

I had no regret over the red thread I had decided to untie.

Elias' figure started fading away, and I was sure the last expression he would see was Lee Ki-Yeon’s radiant smile.

He was probably looking at someone who was preparing to step into the world with a smile that was brighter than the smile he saw when he first met her.

He was looking at a woman who had clenched her fist with the determination to live an independent life instead of relying on others.

Lee Ki-Yeon had decided to become someone who would pick herself up instead of waiting for someone to pick her up. It was all for the sake of living her own very life on this harsh continent.

What Lee Ki-Yeon needed wasn’t an elf of a kingdom to come and rescue her. She needed a partner who would trust and support her. With a slightly anxious and nervous expression, she took another step, and it was a step of great significance in her life.

“Thank you, Mr. Elias,” I said.

*‘You got dumped, man.’*

“Miss Ki-Yeon…” he mumbled.

*‘I dumped you.’*

“…”

*‘You have been eliminated, Mr. Elias.’*

“I’ll be… cheering for you,” I said. However, my words were unlike how an ex-boyfriend would send a text in the middle of the night.

“Thank you,” Elias said.

Lee Ki-Yeon nodded.

# CHAPTER 1063
# PICNIC (26)

“Mr. Elias? Miss Ki-Yeon—”

“I think we’ll have to keep an eye on her,” Elias interrupted her.

“What?” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“That’s… the path she has chosen. I’m sure… she’ll overcome it in her current state…” Elias told her.

“I don’t… understand what you’re saying, but…” Jo Hye-Jin paused.

“…”

“If you say so, Mr. Elias…” Jo Hye-Jin continued, “We’ll just have to watch over her, then.”

“…”

“…”

“Yes. I think the least we can do right now is… watch her fight,” Elias said.

Of course, the sight of Elias looking at me with the emotions of a pathetic ex-boyfriend was impressive. Obviously, he couldn’t hide his tears and how upset he looked. He could no longer be with Lee Ki-Yeon, and there wasn't any reason he could use to force it.

I also got the feeling that he was willing to support my decision. No matter how pathetic Elias was, he wasn’t a psychopath who would get angry just because I had untied the red thread tying us together.

At a glance, it seemed like he wasn't affected, but I knew he was affected. The path was so clearly set that he no longer had a reason to go back to the last girl he dated, but the long-awaited Red Thread Coin ended up going to the ground instead of to the moon.

Since he was in the middle of an incident that could potentially destroy the continent, he didn't have the luxury to think about this at the moment. An honorable man like him would only feel regret and upset once he was on his bed at night.

*'I hope he doesn't think I'll go back to him.'*

He wasn't imagining that I'd go back to him with a bright smile after this was over, right?

He was slow-witted, so I thought it could happen.

*'It's over between us, okay? You get that, right? It's over. The red thread has been cut.'*

*'But why does he look sad? Was he that worried about Lee Ki-Yeon, who was fighting a bloody battle with Gela inside her?'*

Had she suddenly become his type, as she had decided to lead an independent life on the harsh continent?

*'Come to think of it, I think that's his type.'*

Someone unwavering, upright, and brave.

The only thing Lee Ki-Yeon and Jo Hye-Jin had in common was that they liked the color blue, especially whenever they went out with Elias.

However, the awakening earlier made me think that I had just become his type. I felt dizzy at the thought of landing in the dark hands of a man capable of making consecutive confessions without giving up.

*'This is ridiculous.'*

I felt like it would never happen.

*'It's really over between us.'*

However, this play needed an actor to play the role of someone who had faith in Lee Ki-Yeon and would support her until the end.

"I… *heuk…* won't lose. Gela," I mumbled.

"…"

"Struggle all you want, child," Gela said.

"I… won't lose," I said.

*'I like the cliche lines.'*

I was reaching my limits while fighting Gela within me.

Just then, I noticed the desert being pelted by black rain. Of course, Lee Ki-Yeon couldn't actually see it because, lore-wise, she didn't have anything like the Telescope.

She just… had a feeling.

— Let's take a break.

— I'll go alone.

— Why are you so stubborn? If we keep going, we're all going to die!

— Then just die there. I'm going to keep going.

— I don't know. I don't know either, damn it.

— He's not wrong, Kennen. If we stop, we'll all die. It's better to clear a

path…

— You think I don’t know that? Damn it…

*‘Ji-Hoo… ’*

He was covered in wounds. The Guides of the Desert and Lee Ji-Hoo had already reached their physical limits. Each battle was so fierce that they were dancing on the line between life and death in the middle of it. They were battles that forced them past their limits.

They were in such a mess that it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that only their willpower was holding them up. Despite that, Lee Ji-Hoo continued walking. If he were the old Lee Ji-Hoo, the Lee Ji-Hoo prior to meeting Lee Ki-Yeon, he'd give up here.

*‘Mr. Lee Ji-Hoo.’*

If he were the young and naive Lee Ji-Hoo, he'd stop long ago. He could only take steady steps toward the trial of the black rain because he had matured after going through many things and realizing exactly what was important to him.

That was why Lee Ki-Yeon could feel Lee Ji-Hoo.

She couldn’t see him, but she could feel his feelings as well as why he was headed this way. At the same time, she understood him. She knew how much he loved her and why he had abandoned her. She knew everything was for her sake.

The hardships that he had experienced so far were for her sake.

He was running toward her while throwing all caution to the wind.

"I have to go."

"I’m not telling you not to go, man. We actually received a divine message to

take you all the way over there. The problem is… we have to get there safely. If we die, it'll be over."

"Even if I get torn to pieces, it doesn't matter. I-I can already feel her."

*'Noona, what's with that line? It's… kind of bad.'*

Lee Ji-Hoo was also aware that Lee Ki-Yeon was watching him.

*'I'll… hang in there as well, Mr. Lee Ji-Hoo. No… I'll endure it, Ji-Hoo.'*

The desert guides, who would surely receive a participation award, sensed something unusual. The black beasts were losing power, and they could no longer grow in size.

They were scattering as well.

Unless these guides were stupid, they would definitely realize what was happening right now. Of course, it didn't really matter, as the lead actor would explain the situation to the audience members to help them understand it.

"She's… fighting back."

"…"

"I don't know what's inside her… but the Ki-Yeon noona I know… isn't someone who gives up easily."

*'Ji-Hoo… what's with your lines?'*

"D-does that mean she's fighting with the evil god who took over her body? Is that why… these black beasts… are losing their powers?"

"I think it's safe to assume that, Alex."

"Do you feel the same way, George?

"Yeah, that has to be the case. Otherwise, this won't make sense. She was the one who gave us our roles, after all."

"Is that even possible? An ordinary human… fighting an evil god? You think she can go against… a transcendent being who caused this black rain to fall across the desert?"

"Whether it’s possible or not is up to her."

"I have no choice but to agree with him. We already know the power of a human being's will, and we are also aware of just how kind-hearted, inspired, and powerful humans truly are. We witnessed it ourselves. Father Lee Ki-Young was also once human, Alex.

"We witnessed the miracles he performed as a human being, and we’re witnessing a miracle right now."

Why was he acting like a sage? Why was he praising humans so much?

The most pathetic one of the desert guides took a sip of the alcohol he had in his pocket before dropping a wise line.

"Gods aren't the only ones capable of performing miracles. Sometimes, mortals like us can perform miracles as well."

He was acting too much like a sage. To make things worse, even Ji-Hye noona seemed kind of surprised by that line. It felt like she was contemplating whether to cut them out or not, as they were saying memorable lines and taking up a lot of screen time when they were supposed to be just supporting characters.

She hesitated for a moment, but it seemed like she had ultimately decided to keep them. She probably thought that this could put some life into the play.

"You said…”

"Yes?"

"You guys said that she sent you here, right?"

"Why do you keep talking rudely to us?"

"Shut up, Kennen. That's not important right now."

"What else did she tell you? What… exactly is the reason she sent you guys here?"

"I don't really remember… but it was to protect you."

"Didn't it happen just now? How can you not remember…"

"Everything happened so fast—wait! *Ah!* She said to help you and to take you to a safe place. That's all we heard from her."

"So why… I…"

"I'm not sure either. It's just… we got that feeling… and we all thought of taking you to her. I don't know the reason either, but…"

"S-She didn't tell you anything else?"

"…"

"…"

*'You forgot one thing, guys. You guys forgot a very important piece of information.'*

And that was when the man named Kennen chimed in…

"Sahaga's gift…"

"What?"

"I think she said something about finding Sahaga's gift…"

"Is that… what she said? What's that?"

"Gela's lover is a god named Sahaga. It'll take too long to explain every detail of the legend… but it was probably Gela who possessed that woman's body, so we probably need Sahaga's gift to calm her down. She knows what can weaken Gela."

"Where is it?"

"W-We don't know either."

"What?"

"We don't know."

"Y-You don't know either?"

"How should I know where the forgotten god's gift is located?"

"Why… why did she mention Sahaga's gift?"

"Maybe we're supposed to let the gift find us, not the other way around?"

"That's just ridiculous…"

*Roaaar!*

The giant black beast before them suddenly stood up.

"Prepare for battle, Alex!"

Before the desert guides and Lee Ji-Hoo could react, the giant black beast lunged at them, trying to crush them with its massive frame as its last stand.

*Boom!*

A giant claw suddenly crushed the black beast.

"Are you guys the Desert Guides?"

"*Uh…*"

"I'll ask again, you lowly humans. Are you guys the Desert Guides?"

"Th-That's…"

"O-Our noona is asking you a question! You insolent fools! Hurry up and answer."

"Sera, Unni, I'll…"

"*Ahem*. Okay. It's ridiculous for me to handle everything. I'll leave this place up to you, Domi."

"Okay. Hello again. I'm sure you're surprised by the sudden situation, but…"

"A-A baby angel…"

"Please calm down and listen to me. We're currently carrying out a quest to deliver Sahaga's gift to the person traveling with the Desert Guides."

"Wh-Where…"

"We can't tell you that."

Dominions looked at Lee Ji-Hoo. The two exchanged glances and smiled. Dominions seemed to have an idea about what was going on as she continued the conversation, leaving behind Dialuria, who was trying hard to show off her dignified dragon form.

"I'll ask again. Are you… the human… who needs Sahaga's gift?

"That's right," Lee Ji-Hoo answered. He pushed back his messy hair and stood at an angle that made him look the most handsome. Then, he turned toward the camera and nodded. "I'll take it."

Dominions even spread her wings.

*‘What are you two doing?’*

# CHAPTER 1064
# PICNIC (27)

*‘Why are you guys talking among yourselves?’*

"Desert Guides and the one chosen by Sahaga’s gift, I wish you good luck in your future endeavors."

"…"

"…"

The process of delivering Sahaga’s gift wasn’t normal. All Domi had to do was hand it to Lee Ji-Hoo, but she lifted it using her mana. Actually, Sahaga's gift was unknown to me, but it looked like a traditional Desert Elf curved dagger.

Sahaga’s very existence was on another continent, so it wouldn’t shine on its own, but it was emitting a faint light for the sake of visual effects.

Receiving a symbol of a god was a very sacred ritual, but Lee Ji-Hoo’s expression showed that he couldn't care less about it, which was in stark contrast to the situation.

Lee Ji-Hoo mumbled, "What I need is her, not luck."

*‘Don’t get too obsessed with saying memorable lines, noona.’*

"I see."

*‘Dominions, don’t agree with her either. Your wings are going to get bent. Stop spreading them.’*

"Dragon who balances the world."

"*Huh?* Domi… *Huh?* Me?"

"Daughter of Sacrifice and Revival. Dragon of Revival. Could I ask for a small favor?"

*"Domi, why are you suddenly…"*

"…"

"*A-Ahem*. I give you permission to speak, Angel who governs the wisdom of the world."

"I want you to help them so that they can reach the heart of the black typhoon."

Dialuria was surprised by Dominions'[1] sudden change in attitude, but she realized that there were many people watching her, so she tried to look serious.

The others realized what was going on and did the same. The so-called Desert Guides were here, and the children started paying attention to their existence once again.

"Normally, it wouldn't be right for the Dragon of Sacrifice and Revival to interfere in human affairs."

*'She must like that title.'*

*"N-Noona?"*

"But, angel who governs the wisdom of the world, I'm sure there's a reason why you've made that kind of request. I don't think you'll make that request without a good reason, so… I will grant your request."

"Dragon of Sacrifice and Revival, if you do that, your seal…"

*'When was that added to the lore? What restaurant are you talking about,*

*Max? What's wrong with you? She doesn't have any seal.'*

"It's my choice, Master of the Rift. I have to do it, even if it means making a sacrifice."

"O dragon…"

"That's my job."

The Dragon of Sacrifice and Revival got up slowly with the determination to make a great sacrifice. I wondered whether she was going to use her Breath of Revival, which was like the antonym of the Breath of Plague.

The sight of the dragon with large horns taking a deep breath with a shining gaze was definitely the highlight of the play, but I couldn't get used to the children's serious faces.

*'Had they eaten something wrong?'*

Meanwhile, the Desert Guides had their mouths open at the sight.

"What… are we looking at right now?"

"What do you mean? It's a miracle."

"Who the hell is the Dragon of Sacrifice and Revival? The angel who governs the wisdom of the world? The Master of the Rift?"

"Looks like… there are still many things unknown to us on the continent. There are still mountains of secrets that are waiting to be discovered…"

"Secrets hidden on the continent… It's not surprising, but it feels like we discovered something we shouldn't have, George."

*'Stop adding strange things to the lore, guys.'*

The sudden appearance of the dragon, angel, and the Master of the Rift made

them fall into a daze. I wasn’t sure what they meant by "secrets hidden on the continent," but I was sure all of this didn’t make sense to them.

They received a divine message and were forced to cross the black desert for it. Then, they encountered an angel as well as the Master of the Rift. They were then awarded the forgotten god's gift.

These weren’t something ordinary adventurers could experience.

Just as expected, the Dragon of Sacrifice and Revival unleashed a huge Breath, and the black beasts manifested by the black rain disappeared upon getting hit.

A deafening explosion reverberated. It seemed that Dialuria had decided to unleash a Breath that was far beyond what she could handle because she was getting pushed back. Of course, she immediately redirected her breath to the sky.

Her Breath shot toward the sky, and it seemed like it was going to pierce the rain clouds. The black brain stopped, but it continued after just a few seconds. Dialuria's expression became solemn as she mumbled, "Go forth, Desert Guides and the human chosen by the gift."

"Thank you."

"Thank you! Dragon of Sacrifice and Revival!"

"Thank you, O Great Dragon!"

"Yeah, yeah. It’s been a while since I’ve seen such polite mortals."

The party continued their adventure, leaving behind Dilauria, who was grinning with satisfaction.

There weren't many beasts left, so the journey had become an easy march for them, but Lee Ji-Hoo's face became colorful as they ventured further into the typhoon. He was looking forward to finally reaching Lee Ki-Yeon, but he

was also scared about what she would think about him. He was really excited to meet his final love for the first time in a while, but his worry about her well-being surpassed all of those emotions.

Lee Ji-Hoo stepped into the eye of the typhoon.

"…"

"This is the place, Master of the Gift."

"…"

"Mr. Lee Ji-Hoo?" Kennen said.

"…"

"…"

Naturally, he encountered Jo Hye-Jin and Elias, who were staring at Lee Ki-Yeon, but Lee Ji-Hoo's eyes were already on Lee Ki-Yeon.

What could he say to her?

Based on their lore, they had been apart for a very long time, and he had even betrayed her. What could he say to the woman who was fighting hard to find herself? He knew this internal strife wasn't simply a fight against Gela.

It was also a fight to find her real self again.

The fight was taking place inside Lee Ki-Yeon, so he couldn't see anything.

It was also a low-budget play, so we had to supplement acting with acting alone.

"Is she…" Lee Ji-Hoo asked.

"She's still fighting," Elias answered.

“I went in and met Miss Ki-Yeon… but she didn’t want my help,” Elias informed.

“…”

“I think she wants to handle this on her own, but I’m not sure why…” Elias mumbled.

*‘What do you mean why? It’s because I don’t like you.’*

Just then, a sweet and quiet voice echoed.

[Child, you should give up now.]

Afterward, there was another quiet voice.

“I can’t… I can’t give up,” I said with determination.

[No matter how strong you are mentally, you’re still a human being. Don’t you hate the world that gave you pain? Don’t you despise this place for leaving you alone?]

How could I not despite the world? I had always been alone. I was betrayed, and I struggled to the point that I felt like the world had abandoned me.

Lee Ki-Yeon was hurt so much that it was impossible to list every single torment she had to withstand.

[I’ll lend you a hand for your revenge, child. I’ll give you the power to make everything you feel and imagine come to life.]

There were times when I would have thoughts. Gela was right; there were times when I wanted to take revenge, so I abandoned everything and tried to leave before I could act on my thoughts. Of course, I wanted power as well.

[The child who betrayed you is here. The one who caused you pain.]

"…"

[Wait, it's not just him. You're pretending to be okay, but I understand the darkness inside you very well. I can be someone who can understand you the most, so don't reject me. Take my hand, child. I'm sure you're also aware that the darkness won't go away in the end.]

Regardless of Lee Ki-Yeon's will, the black storm engulfed her again.

[That's right, just take my hand. Take my hand, you poor child.]

However, Lee Ki-Yeon hadn't grabbed Gela's hand. Lee Ji-Hoo got close to her at some point and reached out to Lee Ki-Yeon, who was enduring the black typhoon—a torment painful even for transcendent beings.

As always, those trying to escape from the darkness would end up reminiscing about the good times. Lee Ki-Yeon mostly had bad memories, but people would normally reminisce about their good memories at the end of the world.

Lee Ki-Yeon was not an exception.

*'A warm hand.'*

The hand that cared and loved her more than anyone and the hand that showed her that the world had happiness, not just pain. It was the same hand that told her she wasn't alone; it was the hand willing to endure pain together with her.

"J-Ji-Hoo?" I stuttered.

"Yeah, noona. I mean… Ki-Yeon," Lee Ji-Hoo answered.

"Is it… really you… Ji-Hoo?" I asked.

"Yeah," Lee Ji-Hoo replied.

Lee Ji-Hoo was crying. The tears flowing down the scar on his face told me his regrets, but at the same time, it seemed like it was curing his pain. It made me cry as well.

"Ki-Yeon, I actually—"

"No, I-I know everything," I interrupted him.

*'Why do you like situations like this, noona?'*

"I finally understand. Everything you felt and why you did what you did. I-I know you did it all for me…" I continued.

*'Why do you enjoy this?'*

I finally realized that many people liked what Ji-Hye noona had chosen as our lore.

"Hang in there. Hang in there, you two! *Heuk!*" Jo Hye-Jin shouted.

*'Seriously… '*

Jo Hye-Jin was cheering us on while crying, and Elias was cheering us on with mixed feelings. It was the same for the Desert Guides. One of them wiped away their tears, as they couldn't stop themselves from crying. What was so touching about this?

Was it *that* heartbreaking watching two people shout out their love for each other in the middle of a pitch-black typhoon?

*'No way. There's no way people enjoy this kind of thing.'*

"Hang in there!"

"Y-You got this!"

*'You're telling me this is working?'*

“I’m sorry, and thanks. Also, I love you, Lee Ki-Yeon,” Lee Ji-Hoo confessed.

“…”

“I always believe in you, and I know you won’t lose to this darkness,” Lee Ji-Hoo added.

*‘There’s no way the public enjoys dialogue like this… ’*

“Ji-Hoo…” I mumbled.

“I’ll be by your side. This time… I’ll protect you. Just as you supported me, I’ll support you,” Lee Ji-Hoo said.

*‘She can’t be right… ’*

“Don’t give up, Miss Ki-Yeon! *Heuk*…”

*‘It’s probably because Hye-Jin is too innocent.’*

Regardless of my feelings, the play was reaching its climax.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry, Gela,” I said.

[…]

“I cannot accept your offer,” I said.

[You’ll regret it, child.]

“I’ll carve out my own future. No matter how hard or difficult things might get, I’m not afraid anymore. I-I have someone who supports me,” I continued.

“Ki-Yeon,” Lee Ji-Hoo said.

“Yeah, Ji-Hoo,” I said.

“Ki-Yeon…” Lee Ji-Hoo repeated.

“Yeah, Ji-Hoo?” I answered.

“Ki-Yeon… Ki-Yeon…” Lee Ji-Hoo said again.

Sahaga’s gift shone, illuminating the entire world.

“…”

“…”

Amidst the miracle, there was an elf standing by himself. He was smiling bitterly with some hint of relief.

*‘Don’t pretend to be okay… ’*

Elias didn’t seem to be okay.

---

1. the children's names have changed to Domi, Thro, Sera, and Cheru, but the author still uses Dominions, Thronus, Seraphim, and Cherubim for the MC's narration. I assume it's because the MC knows that they are the outer gods reborn ☜

# CHAPTER 1065
# PICNIC (28)

Now that I[1] thought about it again, it was such a beautiful sight. The gift unleashed a massive beam of light, and the God of the Desert Elves, whom the continent had already forgotten or perhaps had to forget, appeared among us.

The light grew and manifested before unleashing a wave of holy power that was too much for mortals to handle.

The beautiful being had long, flowing hair. He had a pair of ears that were pointier than a high elf, making him resemble a Desert Elf. It was strange. I could clearly see the image made out of light, and I couldn't believe that I could see a god up close.

"…"

"…"

It was a strange series of things that were hard to understand, but what I saw back then was a defining moment that encompassed everything. We were standing before a god; we were witnessing the continent accepting a new god.

Sahaga held Gela and disappeared.

They had a long conversation, but…

*'I couldn't hear anything.'*

It was all so sudden, and I was sure we wouldn't be able to hear with human ears.

In some ways, it was a pretty upsetting ending.

Perhaps all the suffering we had experienced was a battle between gods, or perhaps it was simply because we could not understand the ordeal as mere mortals. People who were unaware of Sahaga and Gela's backstory would surely have these thoughts.

"George, are you saying this happened because of Sahaga and Gela?"

"That's the only explanation. After all, Gela calmed down immediately when Sahaga appeared. Of course, Miss Lee Ki-Yeon's willpower to go against Gela was probably the decisive factor, but it was Sahaga who calmed her anger," the Third-rate Gambler answered the Playboy.

"It's pretty shocking, and it's really hard to understand…" Kennen mumbled.

"How can we understand the gods? They're transcendent beings, after all. Just like the story of Juliena, the ancient shaman who was locked in a dungeon for angering a god, or like the warrior who had won the favor of a transcendent being and had received great power as a result.

"Gods are fickle, selfish, and selfless. In their eyes, we're just mere specks of dust, so how could we understand them? A-A god's love, in particular, is considered to be the most dangerous in any legend," George explained.

"…"

"Gela's anger toward the continent may be a very natural reaction when you think about it from her point of view," George added.

"Are you talking about her taking revenge on the continent for abandoning Sahaga?" Kennen asked.

"We'll never know if her anger is her wanting to get revenge on the continent for driving out Sahaga. It can also be because she's simply angry at Sahaga, or if she's just putting on a show to get his attention…" George answered.

“That’s a bit…”

“Can you say for sure that I'm wrong, Kennen? In the end, Gela got what she wanted. She possessed the body of the woman she had chosen and waited for an opportunity before threatening Laves by bestowing upon it a pitch-black rain.

"Ordinary people would’ve just waited for the rain to stop, but for the transcendents trying to maintain balance, I’m sure it was a serious problem,” George continued.

*‘Transcendents trying to maintain the balance of the continent… ’*

I was sure they were referring to people like the Dragon of Sacrifice and Revival, the angel who governs the wisdom of the world, and the Master of the Rift. They were also the ones who handed them Sahaga’s gift.

*‘Now that I think about it… ’*

I felt like a puppet. I felt like we were being led to wherever they wanted us to go instead of us taking the initiative to resolve the issue. No, I was sure we were being led. Those beings felt that their involvement in the lives of mortals had to be minimized, so they needed people to do the work on their behalf.

“In the end, they must've guided…” I mumbled.

“It’s a possibility because so many things worked out too perfectly to consider it a coincidence. As I said before, the gods are miracles themselves, Alex. Think about the Sunset God being in Gela’s position and losing the God of Sacrifice and Revival,” George said.

“This is just child’s play,” Kennen commented.

“Yeah, sounds like it,” George said.

“That made it easier to understand, George,” I said.

George smiled and sipped his drink.

“So… what happened to them, Alex?” George asked.

“*Ah*… are you referring to Mr. Lee Ji-Hoo… and Miss Lee Ki-Yeon?” I asked.

“Yeah.”

“Well… I heard they left Laves, but you guys already knew that. Actually, the Continental Protection Management Committee has been keeping quiet as well,” I answered.

I remember them smiling brightly after coming back to their senses.

Miss Lee Ki-Yeon had a small blanket wrapped around her, and Mr. Lee Ji-Hoo hugged her. They smiled at each other, and they looked at the stars while sitting in front of a campfire under the desert night.

It was like they were in their own world. Miss Jo Hye-Jin and Mr. Elias seemed like they didn’t want to interrupt them, as they left them alone despite the many questions they had in their mind at the time.

They had a lot of things to take care of in Laves, so they had probably thought that everything would soon be handled, but the two disappeared the next morning, leaving only a note.

“It was probably a note saying thank you and that they’re going to live happily in a quiet place,” George informed.

“I wonder where they went,” I mumbled.

“Probably to a place no one can find them?” George answered.

“That’s romantic. From what I heard… it sounded like Mr. Lee Ji-Hoo made quite a few enemies…” I said.

“I’m sure they’re safe. Those two… will probably be able to overcome any

trials," George said.

They had even overcome a god's trial. I was sure they were living a simple life, looking at the clear sky they liked so much in a place where no one could find them. That was the best ending for this story.

"Let's have another drink, Alex. How about we cheer for those two?" George suggested.

"Stop suggesting we have another drink, George. You've been saying that for a while. Did you forget who we're meeting?" I asked.

"*A-Ahem.*" George cleared his throat.

Just then, the door of the shabby tavern opened, revealing two figures.

"This is where you were."

"Miss Jo Hye-Jin, Mr. Elias. It's an honor to meet you again," I greeted.

These two were with us in the eye of the black typhoon.

They were the Blue Guild's God of Spear and the representative of the Union of Others.

Normally, we wouldn't run into them, but we were comrades who fought together during that random incident. It was awkward meeting them in a place like this, but I relaxed upon seeing their friendly faces.

"You don't need to be so formal. We're comrades who fought together, after all," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"B-But…"

"I'll have a drink as well, and Mr. Elias as well," she said.

"Sure, I'll have a drink," Elias said.

"…"

"…"

"I-I was really surprised… when you asked to meet…" I confessed.

"No, I'm actually sorry for asking to meet at a place like this. I actually thought you should receive better treatment…" Jo Hye-Jin paused.

"Yes?"

"You guys are heroes who saved the continent, after all," Jo Hye-Jin continued.

"No… that wasn't our intention. It's just—"

"Whatever the reason is, it's an undeniable fact that you three had contributed a lot to saving the continent. You deserve to receive a reward from the Continental Protection Management Committee, the Vatican, and Lindel's major guilds, but unfortunately…" Jo Hye-Jin trailed off.

"*Ah…* I see," I mumbled.

"We decided to keep this incident a secret. Of course, we prepared a gift for you, but officially, we decided to act like that incident has never happened at all," Jo Hye-Jin explained.

"Can… I ask why?" I asked.

It was a stupid question, as there were many reasons I could think of.

I was sure it was to prevent discomfort among the denizens and to ensure that they would not live in fear again.

The Blue Guild wouldn't want them to know the truth.

In addition, transcendents protecting the balance of the continent had

interfered, so just telling everyone that the issue was over wouldn't be enough to reassure the people. It would be best to keep it a secret for many reasons, but I heard an unexpected answer.

“It was Miss Lee Ki-Yeon and Mr. Lee Ji-Hoo’s idea,” Jo Hye-Jin informed.

“What?”

“Of course, there are reasons I can’t explain, but they wanted to live a quiet life. *He* said that he understood why they went into hiding, so of course, we had to stop our investigation,” Jo Hye-Jin continued.

“Who… said… that…” I asked.

“Father Lee Ki-Young said that. He said he wanted to respect those two,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“…”

“He just wanted to wish them good luck,” Jo Hye-Jin added.

At the same time, the door of the shabby tavern opened again, revealing a familiar figure whom I had never seen up close.

“O Benigoa,” I mumbled.

The figure removed the hood attached to his white priest uniform, revealing his face to me. I had seen his face on screens before, but it was different seeing him in person.

The Saint of the Continent, the God of Sacrifice and Revival, the symbolic figure representing the holy power of the continent as the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country, and the Son of Benigoa.

*‘It’s really… Father Lee Ki-Young… ’*

“…”

"…"

I felt suffocated, and that was the only way I could describe my feelings.

I had never been nervous in any battle, but I became tense upon seeing him, making it harder to sit properly. He had to have stayed up all night after hearing about last night's incident because he really looked tired. However, his exhaustion couldn't reduce his intelligent and holy demeanor.

I felt more awkward than when I saw Sahaga and Gela.

His faint smile made me tremble unknowingly like an aspen tree.

"F-Father Lee Ki-Young," I said.

I wanted to jump up from my seat, but my legs wouldn't listen. Just as I was about to apologize…

"Please stay seated."

I heard his soft voice.

"So it's them," Lee Ki-Young said.

"That's right," Jo Hye-Jin answered.

"They're the Desert Guides…" Lee Ki-Young said.

"It's an undeserving title. We just did—"

"You should take credit for your work. Regardless of your contributions, you're already my heroes. I just feel really bad that we can't give you the treatment you deserve. If there's something you want, please let me know. If it's something I can give you, I'll do my best to get it for you," Lee Ki-Young said.

"We don't… really need anything… but…" I paused.

“Yes?”

“If you don’t mind, could you bless me…” I requested.

“That’s easy,” Lee Ki-Young said, placing his hand on my head. A faint light pervaded me in an instant. Then, he said a prayer, and it felt like my sins were purified out of me.

*‘Is this a dream?’*

The word "touched" wasn’t enough to describe my feelings.

Would I be able to ask him for his autograph? Or perhaps obtain a rosary from him?

I felt like my head was going to explode from my ridiculous thoughts, and it made me ask an unexpected question for some reason.

“Do you… know where they are?”

I could guarantee that I had never been this nervous in my entire life.

---

1. Alex’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1066
# PICNIC (29)

“Do you know… where they are?” I asked.

I couldn’t even understand why I was asking such a stupid question, as what had happened to them afterward was none of my business.

Mr. Lee Ji-Hoo had worked with us, but it was just temporary.

It was not like we shared any personal stories or had any camaraderie between us. Our relationship was close to that of an employer and employee. There was no reason for me to be curious about their whereabouts, especially Miss Lee Ki-Yeon, but still…

*‘I want to know the ending of their story.’*

Any experienced adventurer would have the same thought as me.

*‘I want to know exactly what’s at the end of their adventure.’*

Those who were truly living on this continent and weren't just interested in monster by-products or dungeon rewards would be curious like me. It was natural to be curious about that story’s ending, which would remain forever unknown to the denizens.

Kennen would probably call me a romantic, but that wasn’t the case.

I wasn’t sure if he understood my feelings, but Father Lee Ki-Young smiled brightly. It was like his eye could see through everything, so I wanted to tell him that I had no bad intentions, but I knew it was meaningless, as he probably already knew my thoughts.

“Yes, I do,” Lee Ki-Young answered.

"…"

"I have an idea… as to why you're curious about their whereabouts and I know you don't mean anything bad by it," Lee Ki-Young continued.

"How could I—"

"To be honest, the things I can tell you are very limited… but I'll happily tell you that," Lee Ki-Young said.

"…"

And Father Lee Ki-Young started going into details. He told us how he helped them go into hiding and about how they headed to a free city managed by the Union of Others.

Of course, he didn't say the exact location.

*'That's what I expected, but… '*

Wasn't it common sense to question how those two ordinary people had disappeared overnight? I had a feeling someone helped them, but…

*'They met… Father Lee Ki-Young.'*

I was sure they discussed many things. I was curious, but it'd be rude for me to ask about the details.

"I see… so they headed to a city managed by the Union of Others. Actually… I thought they would head somewhere… where no one could find them, a place with no people…" I said.

"They didn't seem scared of meeting and living among others. It seemed like they wanted to start a new life like that. They talked about what they were going to do. The lady said she wanted to work with adventurers—"

"What? When you say working with adventurers…" I interrupted him.

“She has experience working as a receptionist, and she was actually a former adventurer,” Lee Ki-Young answered.

I turned my head without realizing it, and I saw Mr. Elias chuckling. It was like he knew that this was going to happen. I knew there were many stories involving the two… but they seemed closer than I thought.

“However, she said she wasn’t going to hide her powers this time. She said she wanted to help people, and that’s probably the reason Elune had chosen her.

"I expect she’ll be working as a wandering priest but under a different name. Of course I’m just assuming things, but Elune truly loves her, and she seems to have understood the role that has been bestowed upon her,” Lee Ki-Young continued.

“I see…” I mumbled.

“Unfortunately, I didn’t have a lot of time to talk to her…” Lee Ki-Young added.

I was worried Lee Ji-Hoo would show the same aggressive attitude he had shown to us to Father Lee Ki-Young, and it was actually possible knowing Lee Ji-Hoo.

“Right.”

“She said her goal was to live happily,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“*Ah…*”

“She said they missed out on too many things… made a lot of mistakes, and caused a lot of pain… She doesn't want to have regrets again; she wants to live as happily as possible,” Lee Ki-Young continued.

“…”

“That was all. She seemed to be in a lot of pain and her priority seemed to be

forgetting the pain and moving forward. She seemed… very aware of that," Lee Ki-Young said.

" I see."

"We talked about many things… but her main point was…" Lee Ki-Young trailed off.

"…"

"It was to live happily together. I'm sure that's the life those two really wanted to have," Lee Ki-Young continued.

For some reason, I imagined those two living together. Actually, they appeared naturally in my mind. They'd probably start their new lives in a small city where humans, elves, dwarves, and other races lived together.

It could also be a small village, not necessarily a city.

They would introduce themselves awkwardly to their neighbors. Since they were a couple who had gone through many things, their neighbors would welcome them with open arms.

If they ended up getting rejected, I was sure they'd just laugh it off.

To achieve their dreams of living together in a small, quaint cabin, they'd take commissions posted in the square. Eventually, they would head to a small Adventurer Guild and start working as adventurers by taking Normal-rank commissions.

They'd mostly be gathering missions or investigation missions.

Since there wouldn't be that many commissions, Miss Lee Ki-Yeon would work as a receptionist at an Adventurer Guild and as an adventurer at the same time. After she was done with work, she'd head to their house.

As we had seen at the time, they'd watch the stars together, have many

conversations, talk about love, and sleep before greeting the brand-new morning.

They would get married, receive their neighbors' blessing, and have a child. They would then watch their children grow amidst laughter, and they would pursue a small and simple happiness. The pain within them would disappear one by one as they lived the happy and normal life they had always wanted to live.

That was the kind of life they would be living from now on…

It was a simple life, but it was more meaningful than anyone else's life.

"Did that answer your question?" Lee Ki-Young asked.

"…"

"…"

"Yes," I answered.

"Originally, I was going to give you your rewards as soon as we met, but she left a letter for you and for Mr. Elias as well," Lee Ki-Young informed me.

"What? Really?" I asked.

"Yes."

He handed me a letter. While I was wondering whether it was okay to read the letter here, I saw Mr. Elias take out his letter quietly from the envelope.

Father Lee Ki-Young did not stop him.

Elias had to have realized that he was being rude, but his eyes were fixed on the letter. I didn't know what was written on it, but he smiled quietly and would sometimes look serious before crying quietly.

No one asked, but Mr. Elias said, “She said she wants us to live happily and that she’s grateful as well as sorry. She also expresses her gratitude for helping her get back on her feet.

"She wants to meet us again. Someday… sometime in the far future. She probably won't be as young as she is now, or she might no longer look like what we think she looks, but she still wants to meet and talk by then.

"That’s what she wrote.”

“It's not like there's a time difference between us,” Lee Ki-Young remarked.

“She said… she’s sorry for cutting the red thread… but she still feels connected to me… and she hopes I’m feeling the same way,” Elias continued.

“…”

Father Lee Ki-Young smiled. It was a smile bright enough to light up the tavern.

“She seemed really grateful toward you, Mr. Elias. I’m sure you had a lot of influence… in convincing them to move to a place managed by the Union of Others,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“Do you think so?” Elias asked.

“Yes, of course. She said she’ll never forget it,” Lee Ki-Young replied.

I opened my letter as well, hoping that she had written something touching, but…

[Thanks. If we happen to cross paths again… I’ll buy you a drink. - Lee Ji-Hoo.]

*‘Jerk.’*

I looked up and noticed Kennen frowning as he read his letter, but he didn’t

seem *that* disappointed. He was probably thinking that the letter truly showcased Lee Ji-Hoo's personality.

“Well, I think that takes care of that,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“…”

“Alex, Kennen, and George. The Blue Guild will give you a limited number of Legendary and Epic-ranked items,” Lee Ki-Young informed us.

“What? T-That’s…”

“Of course under the condition that you won’t sell them. If the Epic-rank items we’re going to give you are made known to the public, it could be troublesome, so I can give you the rewards under the condition that only you three are going to use it,” he added.

“That’s…”

*‘Too much isn’t it?’*

I understood that he wanted us to promise that we wouldn't leak any information about how he had given us Legendary-rank items, but the gag order for Epic-rank items was a bit confusing.

When I thought about what he said, however, I realized that the Epic-rank items that we were about to receive could be just as powerful as Legendary-rank items.

I was more dumbfounded than happy.

It felt like the rewards were a little too much for what we had done.

“You deserve the rewards. You helped save the continent, and you completed a difficult quest. We actually think you deserve more, so you don’t need to feel too overwhelmed by it. Great power comes with great responsibility, but…” Lee Ki-Young explained.

"…"

"I've read your logs," Lee Ki-Young said.

"…"

"You participated in many wars and adventures. Starting from the 27th Legion Summoning Incident… to the recent Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary Expedition. I'm confident you'll use these rewards for the continent," Lee Ki-Young continued.

"B-But-"

"The Continental Protection Management Committee will prepare a small reward, and the Democratic Country will be giving you medals of honor. Of course, the medals are going to be unique," Lee Ki-Young informed us.

"…"

Father Lee Ki-Young got up calmly before saying, "On behalf of everyone, I'd like to thank you again."

I bowed slowly. I told him it wasn't necessary, but he looked so elegant and holy that I froze upon seeing him bow.

"Thank you very much," Lee Ki-Young said.

"W-Wait…"

"That's—"

"It's time to head out, sir. The guild master is waiting for you. He said you two are going to spend some time together…" Jo Hye-Jin interrupted.

"Okay, Miss Hye-Jin," Lee Ki-Young said.

"I think he's waiting for you outside the tavern right now," Jo Hye-Jin

informed him.

Lee Ki-Young was silent. There was nothing else I could say; he smiled and blessed us until the very end.

However, I was curious. Lee Ki-Yeon, Elune's Chosen One, had given up everything she had and got the happiness she wanted—to live a simple life with the man she loved.

She found happiness after letting go of all her burdens.

How about the Saint of Sacrifice and Revival? How was he feeling? He was carrying all the burdens and sins; the fate and sadness of the continent; and even the negative emotions of the denizens, such as anger, malice, and more.

Was he happy… to live as the Saint of Sacrifice and Revival and a god instead of as himself? He was smiling more warmly than anyone else, but was he *really* happy?

“F-Father Lee Ki-Young,” I stuttered.

“…”

“Father Lee Ki-Young!” I called out.

“Yes?” Lee Ki-Young answered.

“Are you… happy?” I asked.

“…”

He tilted his head at the strange question, but he revealed a genuine smile I had never seen before as he replied, “Yes, I’m happy."

# CHAPTER 1067
# PICNIC (30)

[I don't know how to thank you…]

[Hey, you don't need to thank me[1], Mr. Sahaga. You're the one who went through a lot of things. I'm sure you had to consider many things when making the move… so I didn't think you'd accept so quickly…]

[Actually, I had to consider many things… but I thought Gela's side was where I needed to be. I also feel bad towards my creations… and I'm really happy that I can answer them now.]

[*Ahem.*]

[…]

[*Ahem… ahem…* Anyway, like I said, in ten years… The wanderers will discover Gela's temple and naturally, your gift and story will be placed in that temple.

[Laves will believe you two have a shared destiny. Many theologians will acknowledge that their past interpretations were wrong, and a new story and legend will be published.

[It will be said that Mr. Bel was behind all of it… and he's the one who split you and Miss Gela. I'll have to see how they get interpreted, but that will mostly be the story.]

[I hope this won't trouble him… Actually, I'm not sure… if this is even necessary…]

[No, I'm sure Mr. Bel will like it.]

[…]

[And… this has to be done. It's a legend that will be around for tens and thousands of years to come, so it's better to go all out when handling this rather than doing it in a half-assed way.

[I'm actually relieved. Sometimes, close-minded beings tend to put their guard up when it comes to work that requires flexibility…]

[What more can I say? You were being considerate… and now I'm just thankful that I can be on this continent with Gela again.]

[I hope you'll use that passion of yours for the continent. I was actually worried because I've been busy recently. *Ah!* Are Miss Gela and Benigoa doing well?]

[Actually… I think there's a bit of conflict…]

[I trust that you'll handle it well. Lastly, if you know anyone who's worthy, try contacting them and let them know that they'll receive the best treatment.]

[Okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.]

[Lee Ki-Young! Lee Ki-Young! I have something to say! It's about Gela! Do you know what she said?!]

Benigoa chimed in.

[I'm busy, so I'll be heading out.]

[Lee Ki-Young! Are you listening to me?]

*'I was close to getting a headache.'*

I closed the communication channel.

It was nice taking Gela and Sahaga up there, but they still needed time to

adapt.

*‘Two beings had decided to join a group of ancient transcendents, not just one.’*

Thankfully, the two liked me, but it felt like Gela was already having problems with Benigoa. There were other problems I needed to deal with, but other than that…

*‘It was handled pretty well.’*

I was able to get Elias away from Jo Hye-Jin.

Dialuria and the children were finally able to get their hands on the guild badges.

Ji-Hye noona seemed satisfied with Lee Ki-Yeon and Lee Ji-Hoo’s ending.

I managed to recruit Gela and Sahaga, even though the production was done at the last minute. I enjoyed it as well, so I felt like I used the past three days pretty well. I had a fun time, and I felt rested, even though I was working.

*‘Are you happy, Father Lee Ki-Young?’*

*'Of course, I'm happy, Desert Guide. This is what I call happiness.'*

I took a sip of my remaining coffee while sitting in a cafe somewhere in Laves.

Just then, I heard a familiar voice. “How is it, Mr. Ki-Young?”

It was such a familiar voice, but it had been a while since I heard it. I turned and saw Kim Hyun-Sung, the man with whom I had a connection thanks to the Regressor Instruction Manual. He was the Guild Master of the Blue Guild and the God of Sunset.

Like a child excited about his field trip, it looked like he had a hard time falling asleep last night, as he looked kind of tired, but overall, he seemed the

same as usual. Unlike Elias, who had the word "tacky" written all over his face, he still had his handsome face that one would see on sports drinks or something.

The only difference was that he was wearing his everyday clothes instead of his usual armor. He looked as if he had dressed up to fit in with the popular kids, but thanks to his height and broad shoulders, it was hard to tell that he was an outsider.

Unfortunately, his behavior betrayed him. His breathing, awkward movements, and his nervous face made it obvious that he was an outsider.

Anyway, I expected Kim Hyun-Sung to act this way, and it would be kind of annoying if he were obvious. He had to have thought a lot about what he ought to do. I was not sure who had decided to help him, but he had to have received help from many people.

*‘He was probably really looking forward to it.’*

He was so excited about it that he actually decided to visit me when I was busy talking to the Desert Guides. I understood his excitement, but it was kind of rude for him to do that, as I was busy working.

*'Damn it, I clearly told him to wait for me at the place where we promised to meet.'*

“How is it… Mr. Ki-Young?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

*‘Thinking about it is making me angry again.’*

“How… does it taste?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

*‘No, don’t get angry. Subdue your anger for today.’*

“Mr. Ki-Young?”

I had no choice but to nod.

“I like that it has a slightly sour taste. It’s my favorite…” I answered.

*‘Sorry, but I actually came here with Elias once.’*

“I’m glad you enjoyed the museum as well, Mr Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*‘Sorry, but I went there with Elias as well.’*

Obviously, I couldn’t disappoint Kim Hyun-Sung, so I tried to look as happy as possible.

I decided to say things like, “*Wow*,” “Amazing,” or “It’s my first time seeing this.”

I made comments and even gasped to put Kim Hyun-Sung in a good mood. He planned it so that it was easier for me to take a look around the museum, so the credit ought to go to him instead of Elias.

If I were to show him a half-hearted reaction, he’d be disappointed, so I had to play along.

*‘I really need to play along for today.’*

“I especially liked those catalysts. I also enjoyed learning about the ecology of the monsters living in the desert. I read the Red Mercenary Guild’s log as well, and I went to that restaurant with a theme centered on Laves,” I said.

“I knew you’d like all of those things, Mr. Ki-Young. I was worried that you’ve already been to those places, so all this while—”

“I’ve been resting in my room. I visited the nearby cafes and restaurants with Ha-Yan… and I had work piled up, so I’ve been working on those things,” I interrupted him.

“I knew it,” Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

"…"

"I was really relieved when I saw how happy you were," Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

"Of course, the monster museum was really amazing, but…" I paused.

"Yes?'

"It's been a while since we spent time together, so anything we do will be fun," I continued.

"*Ah…*"

"We've been really busy," I said.

"Yes, we really have been busy…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Something always happens whenever I think things are going to quiet down, and it's been like that for quite a while now. I actually forgot how to relax. It's really been a while since I spent time at a cafe like this and spent time with you," I explained.

"You're right," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"They're not empty words," I told him.

"…"

"I know we went out a few times when you still had no job, but it was a pretty crazy situation. We had to clean up the mess after the continent dungeon incident, and all we really did was go to places near the guild and Lindel," I continued.

*'Yeah, the time when you had no work and didn't do anything.'*

"After that… Templar—"

“Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung interrupted me.

After the Templar Gen incident, Kim Hyun-Sung and I were in a cold war. When he was unemployed, we barely spent time together.

Kim Hyun-Sung, who hadn't spent time with anyone else other than me since birth, was probably waiting for this opportunity, as he was acting as if he were one of the popular kids.

“So, what have you been up to?” I asked.

“I had many things to do, but… I can’t tell you the details. I think it’s better to tell you later rather than telling you now,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

*‘Look at him acting all confident.’*

“That makes me even more curious,” I said.

“I’ll tell you later,” Kim Hyun-Sung repeated.

“Don’t be like that,” I said.

“I’ll tell you everything later,” Kim Hyun-Sung insisted.

“Is it some kind of great secret?” I asked.

“It’s nothing like that… Anyway, let’s get going,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Where are we going next?” I asked.

“It’s a tour of the Laves Desert,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

*‘I already did that with Elias as well, damn it.’*

“Actually…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“How about we ride our griffons?” I suggested.

*'I’d feel bad if I’m the only one having fun. You need to have fun as well.'*

“What? Really?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“Of course. It’s been a while since we rode together, and it does relieve stress, doesn't it? It’s dangerous to ride alone, and it's also quite boring. However, it’s a different story if we're riding together,” I said.

“Right, if you say so…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

“And I have a lot of things to worry about when riding alone,” I added.

*'If I ride with you, you'll take care of everything for me, including putting on the equipment and doing a safety check.'*

Of course, I wasn't worried about falling, as I had wings, but his argument was we needed to be as safe as possible riding on a griffon. It wasn't like I didn’t care about safety, but riding with Kim Hyun-Sung did make me enjoy riding griffons.

“I’m sure it’ll be boring for you to go with me—”

“No, that’s not true. I have so much fun that I can’t describe it with words,” Kim Hyun-Sung interrupted me.

*‘You like it that much?’*

“Anyway, let’s go. I’ll contact the griffon station in advance,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Isn’t Whitefall in Lindel?” I asked.

“The Whitefall juniors are in Laves,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

“*Ah*, so they’re already…”

“Yes, I think this is a good opportunity. I trained them personally, but I've never taken them out for a ride, so this will be a good opportunity for them,” Kim Hyun-Sung informed me.

*‘Do they even remember me? The last time I saw them was when they were babies.’*

“I’m sure the babies will be happy,” Kim Hyun-Sung added.

The griffons truly looked happy upon seeing their owner for the first time in a while.

“Damn it! Hyun-Sung! This one bit me!” I shouted.

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1. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1068
# PICNIC (31)

“Damn it!” I shouted.

“Mr. Ki-Young!” Kim Hyun-Sung yelled.

“Shit! Shit!” I yelled.

It happened all of a sudden. A total of sixteen Whitefall juniors were dispatched to Laves. It was an unfortunate event that occurred within five minutes after the black and white griffons rushed toward me.

They had to be happy to see their master for the first time in a while because they attached themselves to me while flapping their wings, but one of them had a hard time containing its excitement and ended up biting me.

It wasn't trying to harm me, but its beak pierced my Endurance. The griffon had to have been surprised as well because it let go of me, but there was already a huge red beak mark on my arm.

“What do you think you’re doing?! Damn it!” Kim Hyun-Sung yelled, sounding upset. I was worried that he would unsheathe his sword and behead the griffon, but…

*‘But he’s holding it in.’*

*'You’re holding it in? Shouldn’t you at least pretend to do something?'*

*‘No, if he actually beheads the griffon, I'll question his personality.'*

I could still remember Hyun-Sung showing mercy on a griffon, even after awakening as Doom Hyun-Sung. The situation would have been different if it had been a human being rather than a griffon, which still made me feel

worried.

However, there was no way he would value a griffon more than a human being.

Kim Hyun-Sung had to have yelled because it happened without warning. The griffon that caused trouble flapped its wings to get away from us. It flew to a corner and looked around anxiously.

“I asked what you were doing, Rookie!” Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

*‘The atmosphere sure is tense.’*

The griffon named "Rookie" was shaking, and it could not meet Kim Hyun-Sung’s scary gaze. Kim Hyun-Sung's shout was like a magic spell, and hostility was seeping out of him as well.

I was sure he often disciplined these griffons, as even though Rookie was the only one getting scolded, the remaining fifteen griffons looked as if they were getting scolded as well.

“Yeah, it was stupid of me to trust you and bring you here,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*Chirp…*

Rookie looked like a full-grown griffon, but it chirped. It chirped as if telling me that he was sorry, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t even look at it and proceeded to examine my wounds.

“Are you okay, Mr. Ki-Young? I’m really… really sorry. Rookie isn’t usually like this…” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“It’s fine. The wound isn’t even that serious, and I don’t think Rookie was actually trying to hurt me…” I said.

“Even so… it must take responsibility for its action,” Kim Hyun-Sung argued.

*‘That applies to you as well, but it looks really discouraged.’*

Not only was it sitting in a corner, but it was crying as well. It was such a heartbreaking sight, and I found it a bit too much, as all it did was bite me. It was still young, so I understood that it couldn't control its actions earlier. It was heartbreaking, but…

*‘It needs to be trained.’*

It was rare, but untrained griffons had attacked humans before. They were just playing around in their eyes, but the individual getting roughhoused would never feel the same way.

Incidents caused by pets were becoming a social issue, so getting bitten by a griffon was a pretty serious issue. I was sure that was the reason Kim Hyun-Sung was taking this incident more seriously than I thought.

Rookie was still crying in a corner, but the attention was no longer on him but on the other griffons, which naturally de-escalated the situation.

I used a potion to treat my wounds, and the nervous Hyun-Sung was finally starting to calm down.

“Thank goodness, it's not going to leave a scar,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“It was just a small bite. I’m sure it was happy since it has been a while since it saw me. That griffon stood out the most among the other griffons. I think it was as big as Shiro when I last saw it… I still remember it,” I told him.

“Griffons have a great memory, so I’m sure it remembers you, Mr. Ki-Young,” he said.

“I only saw it for a moment back then…” I mumbled.

“If I remember correctly, you were petting Whitefall when you first saw Rookie, so maybe… it thought of you as its owner,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“What?”

*‘Damn it, I must’ve been too indifferent.’*

However, there was nothing I could do about it. It wasn't like Whitefall had laid only one or two eggs that I could easily handle. It laid eggs so often that I couldn’t take care of each and every one of them. I had no time to do something like that, so all I could do was look at them at least once.

It was happening so often that I told Kim Hyun-Sung not to report to me whenever Whitefall laid eggs. Each time I visited, a group of them would rush toward me, so I couldn’t even tell them apart anymore.

Of course, we had professional breeders and caretakers, but it seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung would often visit them and spend time with them. He even gave them their own name, allowing me to tell them apart. They obeyed him as well.

*'So he spent time with the griffons during his spare time instead of meeting people. Maybe he feels more comfortable around them than being around other people.'*

“Come here, Alpha,” Kim Hyun-Sung called. He hugged a griffon that had a nice mixture of black and white, which made me think that my assumption was true.

“I’m sure this one remembers you as well, Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“*Ahh*, yes, it looks like it remembers me,” I agreed.

“Recently, I’ve been going out riding with it the most. It has high stamina…”

*‘There he goes with his specialty again.’*

“And if you take a closer look at its wings, you can see that it’s slightly bent, unlike the other griffons. Its wings aren’t deformed. These types of wings are

seen on only certain griffons, and it allows them to change directions while in the air…" Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

"*Ah,* I see! That's impressive," I commented.

"If you look at the color of its feathers… it has Whitefall's…"

"*Ah*, I see! That's amazing," I said.

"Also, if you look at Alpha's eyes…"

"*Ah!* I see it! It's great," I said.

He really liked it whenever I played along with him while showing off his knowledge.

"And it's cute," Kim Hyun-Sung added.

"*Ah!* I see! That's great," I commented.

Kim Hyun-Sung never really had the chance to explain or show off like this, so I needed to play along since he was enjoying it.

"So…"

"*Ah!* I understand! That's great," I said.

"It is."

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed worried that I would treat him like an *otaku*, but he looked happy.

"Since we're not going to be flying fast today, I think it's best if you ride another griffon instead of Alpha. I'll… recommend you one, Mr. Ki-Young. What about that one? Come here," he called a griffon over.

"No, it's fine. I want to fly with Rookie," I told him.

“What?”

“Am I not allowed to?” I asked.

“It might… be kind of dangerous… As you already know, Rookie—”

“I’ll have you with me, so I have nothing to worry about. It’s just…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“Seeing it crying in a corner by itself…”

*‘It reminds me of you.’*

Rookie was cowering in the corner and was crying while facing the wall.

*'It’s okay to give second chances.'*

“I’ll make preparations, but let’s have a cup of tea first…” Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

“Okay.”

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed a little worried, as Rookie had already made a mistake once, but he looked determined as he proceeded to get ready for our flight.

I was drinking the tea that the caretaker had brought over, and I saw him having a serious conversation with the caretaker. They were talking about adding equipment, about some not being enough, and he looked like a professional with the way he checked their wings.

*‘Maybe we should hold a tournament.’*

*'I think he’ll really like it.'*

I wondered whether people with griffons would even join the tournament, but rich people would probably hire acting riders to enter the tournament.

They would want to prove their griffon's pedigree, after all.

*'When it comes to pedigree, Whitefall, and Hyun-Sung's griffon are pretty impressive as well.'*

If we somehow managed to grow it into a proper business like horse racing, it could be worth watching, and there was still some leftover land in Rift Land. It wouldn't be so bad to invest in that…

I started tapping my thigh while thinking about a potential business venture.

A few minutes later, Kim Hyun-Sung finally called me to come over to him. It seemed that he wanted to make up for his mistake because he looked determined, just like Rookie.

"Let's go," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Okay."

The two griffons took to the sky, and it took no time for us to see the entire Laves Desert.

— Are you okay?

*"Yes."*

— Please let me know if it's too high or if we're flying too fast.

*"I can keep up, so you don't worry too much, Mr. Hyun-Sung."*

— Okay.

The strong wind was blowing against my face, but watching the world with a bird's eye view was more fun than flying on a griffon.

I saw Dialuria and the children walking down the street proudly wearing their guild badges. The new members seemed to have finally met each other,

as I could see Colonel Smith, Belier, and Alps walking around the square as well.

Some people noticed us on the griffons, and they greeted us from down below.

*"It's so relaxing. But whenever I think about how money was spent on Laves City…"*

—…

"I w*as angry at first, but this sight makes me feel like it was a good choice."*

— Th-Thank you.

*'He must be touched.'*

*"Anyway, the Laves Desert is really big."*

— That's right. If you want to take a look at the entire desert, it'll take you more than a day or two. By the way, there's a place I want to show you.

*"What? Where…"*

— Just follow me.

*'You have too many secrets.'*

It felt like the day went by pretty quickly. We went to the monster museum and ate. Then, we went to a cafe to drink coffee and talk. Afterward, we spent some time at the griffon platform before riding on a griffon with no destination in mind.

Now we were staring at the sunset.

*'Has he been possessed by a ghost of someone who died without being able to see the sunset with their loved one or something?'*

The most important part of the plan for Kim Hyun-Sung was watching the sunset. Just as I thought that perhaps he had found a decent spot in the Laves Desert to do that, he guided me to an unexpected destination.

*"Where are we?"*

— We're in the Salt Desert.

It felt like there were two skies. Like the Mirror Lake, the Salt Desert of Laves Desert perfectly reflected the sky.

“We can land here,” Kim Hyun-Sung informed me.

“*Wow…”*

*‘It’s pretty amazing.’*

I had seen many things, so I ought to be tired of something like this, but it was still impressive. No words were needed for this, and there was no need for me to say how cool or amazing the scenery was.

The world was dyed orange, and Kim Hyun-Sung quietly stared at the sunset. It felt like we were stepping on the sunset sky. The whole world was bathed in the colors of sunset, making me feel in awe of nature.

“…”

“…”

“It’s nice,” I commented.

“…”

Kim Hyun-Sung smiled with satisfaction. The Salt Desert bathed in the colors of sunset was so beautiful that my reaction was actually genuine. He could tell that my reaction was genuine.

“I always wanted to come here with you, Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Have you been here in your first life?” I asked.

“No, I had no reason to visit the Laves Desert, but I heard that this place was a hidden gem. I thought about wanting to come here someday, and I finally got the chance. At the time, I had no time to come here,” he replied.

“…”

“I don’t know how to describe what I’m feeling right now,” he added.

*‘Yeah, it’s pretty impressive.’*

There was a *fwoosh* as the sunset engulfed the world.

Kim Hyun-Sung finally said, “Mr. Ki-Young.”

“Yes?”

“Actually…” Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

“…?”

He always had this serious demeanor, but he seemed even more serious than usual.

His serious face made me feel kind of nervous.

“Please don’t be surprised when I tell you this,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*‘What is it?’*

“Actually…”

“…”

“I summoned Chanelia Hermes,” Kim Hyun-Sung revealed.

# CHAPTER 1069
# PICNIC (32)

"What?"

“So…” Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

“…”

“I summoned Chanelia Hermes to this world,” he continued.

*‘This jerk succeeded in the end.’*

Of course, I had to be happy about it, but Kim Hyun-Sung looked kind of worried.

He had worked hard on this surprise gift of his, so he was worried about my reaction.

I was sure he wasn't worried about my reaction while he was preparing the gift, as he was as stubborn as a mule. He was so obsessed with Chanelia Hermes that he was sure it would be the best present for me.

However, he was losing confidence right before announcing the surprise, like how people get nervous right before the test results were announced.

I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung was having a headache while mulling over these possible thoughts.

*"Will he really be happy?*

*"Did I get too ahead of myself again by using necromancy to bring back Chanelia Hermes? Was that even the right thing to do? Bringing back a dead person is always morally problematic.*

*"No matter how much I think about it, I don't think Mr. Ki-Young will be happy. He might actually scold me. No, he's actually* not *against black magic. It might not be so bad, considering that he has invested in black mages for the reconstruction project."*

*"But… this is necromancy, not some ordinary black magic.*

*"Did I make a mistake? Should I not have done that?"*

There was no need for me to use the Regressor Instruction Manual, as I could tell from Kim Hyun-Sung's face that he was having mixed feelings about it.

"But Chanelia Hermes isn't from this era." I pointed out.

"…"

"Are you saying that you used necromancy… to summon Chanelia Hermes to this place?" I asked.

The sun was setting, and he probably felt his fate being thrown into the pit of darkness just like the dark sky. He closed his eyes, and regret was written all over his face. He was regretting not being more careful about telling me the news.

*'No, you shouldn't have told me at all.'*

*'If there are variables in your plan, you shouldn't have rolled the dice at all. Why make the situation even more serious by betting on something you felt like wasn't going to work out?'*

"No, it wasn't n-necromancy. It's not the necromancy that black mages normally use. It's hard to explain, but I can assure you that it's not necromancy," he answered.

"If bringing a dead person back to life isn't necromancy, then what is it?" I questioned.

“Well, they said it wasn’t necromancy. I remember it being something similar to that,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered, realizing that everything would end the moment he acknowledged the negative word "necromancy."

My heart broke when I saw his attempt to avoid the negative image of the word "necromancy," but I couldn’t just overlook it.

*‘If I go easy on him just because I feel bad for him, he’s going to do it again.’*

Chanelia Hermes was just the beginning. If I showed him that I liked it, the souls of bag craftsmen who had disappeared centuries ago could appear on the continent again. His first gift happened to be a bag, and he came this far because I had shown him how much I liked bags, so I had to resolve this issue as soon as possible.

“Necromancy is necromancy. What can be similar to it?” I questioned.

“What?”

“I knew there was something fishy the moment I saw those black mages. *Wheeew…”* I sighed.

“…”

“Are you aware that there are appropriate procedures to perform necromancy under the continental law?” I asked.

“I… already went through the procedure,” he answered.

*‘Yeah, I’m sure you did, and you probably used your powers as well. How is it possible that something that is supposed to take months actually bore results so quickly?’*

Necromancy was forbidden in the Democratic Country. In the Republic, necromancy was only performed during trials or whenever the country needed to perform it, and it would always be performed under strict examination and surveillance.

Of course, this only applied to the souls of murder victims who had died in an unjust manner as well as historically important figures who needed to appear to the world.

Basically, Chanelia Hermes had no reason to reappear in this world.

I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung had done something to make the process faster.

"I already know how you did it. You always do it like that," I said.

"No, I really went through the proper procedure…" Kim Hyun-Sung argued.

"It's common knowledge that you shouldn't use necromancy for personal gain. The black mages are just getting their freedom back. If people find out that necromancy was used…" I paused.

"…"

"Using forbidden for personal gain… How… how can you do something like that?" I questioned.

"I-I'm sorry," Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"How… could you…" I said.

I needed him to be shocked, even though I would still accept his gift later. He needed to realize that he really messed up so that he wouldn't do this again. As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung immediately became confused.

"I-I didn't do it… for my personal gain… Your happiness is the continent's…" Kim Hyun-Sung stammered.

*'What is he talking about? There must be something really wrong with his head.'*

*'Actually, he's right. My happiness is the continent's happiness.'*

"*Whoooo…"* I sighed.

"I'm sorry. I… didn't think it through," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"You should know that apologizing won't resolve this issue," I told him.

"I do…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"So…" I paused.

"Yes?"

"I'll keep this a secret," I continued.

"What?"

"Just this once," I added.

"*Ah!*"

"Don't do this again. It's just this once…" I clarified.

"Okay!" Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"I'll overlook it," I said.

"Okay!"

Finally, he sounded energetic. He would always be energetic at times like this. Of course, I didn't stop sighing and showing my disappointment, as I had to make sure that he wouldn't do something like this again on his own.

*'We're on vacation… so there's no need to ruin his mood.'*

It seemed that traveling made people more generous.

Normally, I would have returned to the Blue Guild with my griffon. Then, I would turn off my hand mirror, lock myself up in my room, and ignore him

for months so he would know his mistake, but I didn't want to do that this time.

*'It's a special day, after all… '*

Kim Hyun-Sung had put in a lot of work for this trip.

When I thought about what he had gone through from his first life up until now, I realized that he had been through many hardships and was just starting to find his own happiness. The days when all he could do was cry were no more, so was making him cry again the right choice?

He was finally becoming mentally stable, so was it right to plant the seed of tragedy again in his mind again?

He never had a friend, so was it right to create conflict with his *only* friend on his happiest day ever? Of course, I needed to correct his behavior to some extent, but regardless of his intentions…

*'It's too soon to discourage him.'*

He made the effort to travel all the way here, so I had no plans of discouraging him. I told him that I was going to overlook it just this once, but I still had to show him that I didn't want to fight and ruin the mood.

I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung could feel that while he was smiling brightly.

He knew that I had taken a step back, and it was a rare sight. He ought to know better than throwing this opportunity away. I was sure he felt relieved, and I was sure he thought the event's success depended on the kind of bag that Chanelia Hermes was going to make.

"I'm sorry. I… acted without thinking it through again. I wasn't being considerate of you," Kim Hyun-Sung apologized.

"There are times when you get too lost in your own thoughts, and I believe that's what happened this time as well. And instead of being considerate, you

should have common sense. You're not the only one living on this continent, after all," I told him.

"You're right. I'm… really," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"It's fine. It's already in the past. If you keep apologizing, it'll only put us in a bad mood," I said.

"…"

*'Am I too nice?'*

*'Is he feeling a bit uneasy because I was being* too *kind?'*

He had the face of a warrior who was fighting for his life. His eyes were telling me that everything would be over if things went wrong.

"I'm really okay," I reassured him.

"Okay…"

"Let's go," I said.

"O-Okay," Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered and started moving nervously. The surprise seemed to be located not too far away from the Salt Desert, as we eventually saw a building that had its lights on.

It was pretty fancy to just call it a shelter, but I could tell that this was part of his plan.

Kim Hyun-Sung got off his griffon and helped me off my griffon. Then, he lit the brazier with a small torch; he was moving like he had been here many times before.

"It's getting dark. Let's head inside, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Is Chanelia Hermes inside?" I asked.

“Yes. The necromancy was completed yesterday night,” he answered.

*‘Didn't you say it's not necromancy? Damn it.’*

“Have you talked to her?” I asked.

“Yes. She also wanted to create her final work. We had some disagreements about the style, but I’m sure she’ll help us. She was friendlier than I thought… so I felt at ease,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

*‘But I’m actually not that interested in her work. I've been collecting them, and I feel empty whenever I see an empty spot in my display case, so I'm probably addicted to bags. However, I’m not obsessed with her work at all.’*

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like a kid who was about to open his present.

I was the one opening the present, so why was he more excited than me?

It seemed like he had already forgotten the fact that he almost got blocked earlier.

Was I supposed to be harsher to him earlier? Was I being too nice? The moment I had those thoughts, I saw someone unfamiliar to me. It was Chanelia Hermes, and the first thing I saw was her true form.

*‘Damn it… what the hell… ’*

“Hello, God of Sacrifice and Revival,” Chanelia greeted.

*‘You’re not human.’*

“And the God of Sunset. I'm so happy to be back home, and it's all thanks to you. I also don’t feel any discomfort being in this fleshly body…” she said.

*'It was a descent, not necromancy, damn it. How did you summon a god here, goddammit?! How did he pull this off? Did the black mages really do something like this? And how is she able to stay in that form? She’s a god from another*

*dimension… '*

*'What the hell is this?'*

How come I hadn't noticed it yet? Kim Hyun-Sung was smiling happily, and the holy power he had saved up until now was flowing out of him into an endless hole. To maintain Chanelia Hermes' form, Kim Hyun-Sung had decided to use the holy power that he had saved up so far, and it was being depleted at a rate visible to the naked eye.

"N-No…" I mumbled.

Kim Hyun-Sung's money was my money.

My savings… my emergency fund… was disappearing right before me.

# CHAPTER 1070
# PICNIC (33)

*'My emergency fund, damn it.'*

My emergency fund… M-My holy power.

"Mr. Ki-Young?" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"God of Sacrifice and Revival?" Chanelia said.

*'Shit, w-what do I do?'*

My mind went blank.

*'I should have stopped it the moment he embarked on that quest by himself.'*

Most of the holy power he was earning through his title as "God of Sunset" was being transferred to me automatically. To be exact, I was receiving 77.9% of his holy power.

When he claimed to be the God of Sacrifice and Revival's subordinate, his holy power was naturally redirected to me. Of course, I could take all of it, but I had to leave 22.1% for his allowance.

I felt kind of bad because I was receiving a lot, but sending the holy power of the supporters who had faith in the God of Sunset to Kim Hyun-Sung was more efficient than receiving it myself.

*'His share is just 22.1%, but… '*

The God of Sunset was receiving an astounding amount of holy power. It was so vast that it was beyond my imagination. The story of the God of Sacrifice and Revival and the God of Sunset was legend itself, and it encompassed the

entire continent, not just a single race or a region.

His followers were followers of Elune, Varian, Lauren, and the God of Sacrifice and Revival as well. Considering the fact that some of the followers celebrated the anniversary of the God of Sunset, it could be said that the entire continent was sending holy power to him.

Of course, the 22.1% that Kim Hyun-Sung was receiving was more than what the average gods were earning. He could hold group events in small areas, activate five or more Legendary dungeons, create new types of weak monsters, awaken old legends, and even transform the terrain of an entire region.

Obviously, it couldn't be converted into gold, so we needed this emergency fund, as we had no idea when something was going to happen.

It was a secret weapon that I had allowed Kim Hyun-Sung to accumulate with the intention of transforming him into my own piggy bank. I-It was turning into ash in real-time and was scattering into nothingness.

*'I should've just taken all of it and handled it myself.'*

22.1%?

Even 3% was a lot for allowance. How come I had allowed him to do as he pleased?

*'He doesn't even know the concept of holy power to begin with.'*

He had recently figured out how to send quests. I thought that Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't need it anyway, so I could accept him using his holy power to send out quests.

*'But he's spending it on this?'*

"…"

“Mr. Ki-Young, are you okay? You don’t look so good,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*‘Do I look okay?’*

“Are you feeling uncomfortable, God of Sacrifice and Revival?” Chanelia asked.

*‘Damn it.’*

“Could you tell me what the descent procedure was like?” I asked.

“Yes, of course. To be exact, I got into a contract with the God of Sunset,” she replied.

“Let me take a look at the contract,” I requested.

“*Oh*… sure,” she said.

*‘You do have the contract, right?’*

Had Kim Hyun-Sung realized that something was wrong? When I asked to see their contract, he became really nervous. However, I couldn’t even hide how upset I was, so he had to have realized that something bad had happened.

“Well, you see, Mr. Ki-Young… I can explain. Actually, there’s an energy that has a similar nature to mana—”

“Not another word,” I interrupted him.

“O-Okay.”

*‘It could be a fraudulent contract.’*

Kim Hyun-Sung had no idea how to write or read contracts. This wasn’t some ordinary incident. He had brought a god from another dimension into this world. Even if Kim Hyun-Sung were ignorant about contracts, Chanelia

Hermes would never accept a verbal contract.

"*Ah*, of course, I'll give it to you. The God of Sunset told me to write the contract myself… so please understand that there may be some entries that are a bit subjective," Chanelia warned.

*'I knew it. I'm sure… she ripped him off.'*

One thing I learned from Benigoa's finance incident was that the gods weren't really nice. In some cases, they were more vulgar and meaner than humans, so we needed to make the contract as clear as possible.

"As you can see, there aren't any issues with the contract. Just in case it seems like I'm asking for *too* much, I asked for the minimum amount of holy power needed for me to maintain my body in this dimension…" Chanelia said.

*'She's right.'*

"He can also pay in installments," Chanelia added.

*'Right.'*

The contract stated that Kim Hyun-Sung had to pay a portion of his holy power over the next several hundred years.

"For the project he had requested… it seems a bit pricey, but please consider it as me taking pride in my work. Even if you don't like it…" Chanelia added.

It was pretty pricey.

*'No, it's* really *pricey.'*

The amount of holy power was equivalent to two hundred and seventy-one years.

For two hundred and seventy-one years, Kim Hyun-Sung would have…

“*Whoo…”* I sighed.

However, I could tell that she was being generous, as it was going to be the final work that she would leave on this continent. It was a price that could probably diminish the pride she had in her craftsmanship.

It was such a large amount that I wanted to slap Kim Hyun-Sung right now, but considering the fact that he had summoned a god from another dimension to make such a request, it was actually a reasonable price.

I read the contract carefully, as I was afraid that there was a trap hidden somewhere in the clauses. I read it two, three, and four times, but I couldn't see any issues.

“So the rumors were true. You are really meticulous,” Chanelia commented.

*‘Obviously… we can’t break the contract either.’*

“I was just thinking how beneficial this contract was for us…” I said.

Kim Hyun-Sung smiled brightly upon hearing that the contract was a good one.

However, all I wanted to do was slap him across the face.

“*Ah!* I see!”

“…”

“I think I know which part you’re worried about, God of Sacrifice and Revival. But you don’t have to worry about it, as you’ll be satisfied with the result. I’m really grateful as well.

"I'm grateful at the fact that I can leave my final work on the continent where I was born. I hope you can trust the pride I have in my craftsmanship. I will never do my work half-heartedly,” Chanelia reassured me.

“Right…”

“Mr. Ki-Young, I think you can trust Miss Chanelia Hermes. She’ll make something perfect for you,” Kim Hyun-Sung chimed in.

*‘Just be quiet.’*

After glancing at Kim Hyun-Sung, I calmed down and looked closely at Chanelia Hermes. Strangely, her smell captivated me more than her looks. I had no idea what she smelled like; she smelled like old leather, but it wasn’t a bad smell. It actually put me in a good mood.

The petite and cute woman had short hair and was wearing a pair of large glasses. She was also wearing a belt and overalls that a leatherworker would wear, so it was obvious that she was doing some kind of leatherworking.

“Now that I think about it, I think I was being kind of rude. I didn’t even offer tea to our guest…” I said.

“What? N-No, it’s fine, God of Sacrifice and Revival,” Chanelia said.

“Would you like to have a cup of coffee?” I asked.

“I’ll gladly drink it!” Chanelia answered.

*‘She does seem kind of energetic.’*

She also looked a bit nervous, but…

*‘At least she’s not hostile.’*

It was probably just me, but she looked like she was trying to impress me. It was strange seeing her try her best not to offend me.

“The coffee smells nice,” Chanelia said.

“Now that I think about it, how come you didn’t settle down on *our*

continent, Miss Chanelia?" I asked.

"*Ahh*, you're curious about that? It's a long story. Actually, I was qualified to move up… but there weren't any job openings on this continent, so I decided to settle on another dimension temporarily, but… I ended up changing jobs…" Chanelia answered.

"I see."

"Production workers are treated poorly here… and I didn't have any epic stories or legends. The continent did not really consider me as a desirable talent to hold onto," Chanelia added.

"*Ah…*"

"In fact, it's pretty common to wander around before getting demoted, but I got lucky. I was able to settle down at a nice place," Chanelia said.

"I see."

*'Did you want to come back here? Did you want to get recruited?'*

"There was a time when I felt sad, but I'm satisfied now…" Chanelia added.

*'I guess not.'*

She took a sip of her coffee before asking, "Now, can you tell me the details of your request? I'm grateful that you're interested in my collection… I would like to hear your personal opinion about what kind of item you want me to make."

*'Was she being friendly because I had her collection?'*

There was a price for everything. I really didn't want to be suspicious of her, but…

"I'll say it again and put my name on the line… The item is going to be…"

I really didn't want to be suspicious of her for no reason, but I still had to ask.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"What? What do you mean…" Chanelia asked.

"Don't be like that," I said.

"What? I really don't know what you're talking about…" she said.

*'Yeah, yeah, I know. Hyun-Sung brought you here and asked you to make something. It's true that we're using you and not the other way around, but it's kind of strange.'*

*'It's also kind of interesting how she's calling us the God of Sacrifice and Revival and the God of Sunset.'*

Our continent had become famous long ago, and it was all because we were the first ones to demand independence. I wasn't certain, but I felt like my name and Kim Hyun-Sung's name was spreading like wildfire.

I assumed that was why Chanelia Hermes was friendly toward us.

It seemed like our achievements were well-known up there as well.

I didn't want to say that it was strange to have access to some of the information up there, and I found it hilarious that I was being nitpicky over a single contract. Actually, nitpicking the contract seemed meaningless, but…

*'Who told her that I was meticulous?'*

*'Who told her that? Did you tell her, Hyun-Sung? Did you tell her to be careful writing the contract because I was meticulous? Did you also tell her that I was collecting all of her bags?'*

"You can be honest with me, then I'll try to consider it as positively as possible," I told her.

I ought to dig through Hyun-Sung's brain, just in case.

With that in mind, a clear image popped up in my head.

*'Mr. Ki-Young has your entire collection, Miss Chanelia. He's very detailed and meticulous, so please create an item with ornate details.'*

He told her.

"…"

"…"

He actually told her.

"…"

"…"

He told her everything.

"…"

"…"

*'Damn it, I'm embarrassed.'*

"…"

*'Should I just laugh it off and say it was a joke?'*

"…"

"?"

That was when I heard Chanelia's solemn voice. "*Whoo…* looks like I have no choice."

“???”

“Please…” Chanelia said.

“Yes?”

“God of Sacrifice and Revival, please help… my dimension as well,” she requested.

# CHAPTER 1071
# PICNIC (34)

"…"

Kim Hyun-Sung was more surprised than me, and he looked at me with confusion on his face. He had summoned Chanelia Hermes to commission her for a bag, but she suddenly asked my help while talking about dimensions and whatever, so I was sure this was pretty shocking news to him.

I was shocked as well, so it would be strange if Kim Hyun-Sung weren't shocked.

"*Wheeew…*"

Chanelia Hermes was attempting to deduce our reactions. I was sure she didn't want to tell us like this, but it was undeniable that Kim Hyun-Sung was the one who had made her descend.

She had never imagined that things would turn out like this, but she was probably trying to find the right time to tell me. She probably thought about bringing it up right before she was done making the bag, as we'd be closer to each other by then.

Or perhaps she was going to bring it up once she was sure that I was satisfied with her work.

*'She's pretty lucky as well.'*

If there really were a problem in the dimension that Chanelia Hermes was managing, then she was lucky to get summoned here. Just as she was thinking about making contact with us, Kim Hyun-Sung somehow decided to

summon her.

*‘I’m sure there are issues.’*

An explanation was unnecessary, as I understood what was going on. I knew why her dimension needed the God of Sacrifice and Revival's intervention.

*‘It’s because there’s a lot of restrictions up there.’*

Our continent had gone through a similar issue before, but it happened before the God of Sacrifice and Revival and the God of Sunset appeared.

I recalled Benigoa feeling the same way as her.

She had asked them for help, but they hadn't listened to her and often left the issue alone until it got really serious. Benigoa had to keep going back and forth with the management agency without having a clear solution, and she couldn’t do her work properly due to the regulations and the necessary approvals.

Personally, I felt like the higher-ups were no different from a typical corrupt and dysfunctional bureaucracy.

*‘Since the higher-ups aren't helping her, she has no one else to turn to.’*

We were independent, so we were her only choice.

“I would like to hear the details,” I said.

“A-Actually, I would like to talk about the bag first, God of Sacrifice and Revival,” Chanelia requested.

“Sure. For now, Mr. Ki-Young—”

*‘You be quiet.’*

“Can you stay quiet for now, Mr. Hyun-Sung?” I interrupted with a cold and

chilling voice.

"…"

"…"

My voice was so cold that Chanelia became tense, and Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he was walking on eggshells around me.

"I don't want to talk about the bag right now. Of course, I like your work, and I enjoy collecting your bags, but… how can I talk about something else when you've approached me with a different intention?" I questioned.

"I-I really didn't have any other intentions, God of Sacrifice and Revival. I was accidentally summoned here. Although we tried to contact you, it wasn't our intention to ask for your help like this," Chanelia answered.

"And now I know," I said.

"I have nothing to say, but I swear on my name, God of Sacrifice and Revival. I have no intentions of deceiving or insulting you. The contract was also written in a way that would be more beneficial to you. I don't want to put you in debt or pressure you," Chanelia added.

"Okay, I'll keep that in mind," I said.

"It's true, God of Sacrifice and Revival," Chanelia said.

*'She* does *look pretty desperate.'*

I was sure they were in an urgent situation.

*'It's probably on the verge of getting even worse.'*

"I'll listen for now. *Ah!* I'll be charging you a separate consultation fee," I told her.

“Pardon?”

“There are fees for any consultation before accepting the commission. If you could just sign the contract…” I trailed off.

“*Ah…* right. I understand,” Chanelia said.

After signing the contract, things settled down a bit, and she finally started talking.

“I’ll formally introduce myself again. I’m Chanelia Hermes, the Goddess of Leatherworking. I am currently working with the administrator of Rohen in the 88th dimension. I have been commissioned for—”

“You don’t need to go into that much detail,” I interrupted her.

“*Ah*, right. So… the 88th dimension is currently in the worst-case scenario both internally and externally. In short, the Continent of Rohen is close to the destruction of its dimension to the otherworldly beings and demons constantly coming out from the rift,” Chanelia explained.

“…”

“The senior administrators have left to seal the rift, a few demon lords opened a dimensional gate, and three monarchs are staying on the continent at the moment. The lower-ranking demons are committing evil deeds to stay on the continent. The continent is turning into a hellish place,” Chanelia added.

*‘Sounds pretty serious. Looks like there are rifts everywhere.’*

I was really glad that Guardian Metel had sealed our rift.

I had no idea just how bad an unsealed rift was, but the fact that three demon lords were staying on the continent meant serious trouble.

*‘It means demons like Belial are already there.’*

They had to be extremists, and if they were like Belial, who was difficult to communicate with, the situation would only get worse. The goal of demon lords with attitudes in stark contrast to Belial wasn't to control the humans.

They were the type to kill the goose capable of laying golden eggs, so I could assume that they weren't going to communicate at all. If they were typical demons who wanted humans to fear them, then…

*'That place has to be like hell right now.'*

"What about the higher-ups?" I asked.

"They're just worried that Rohen will become a conflict zone. They sent an official letter to the demons, urging them to recall the demon lords in Rohen. They're currently negotiating, but we don't know when they'll be done with the negotiations," Chanelia replied.

"If you had to guess… how long do you think it will take?" I asked.

"About a hundred years," Chanelia answered.

The continent would be destroyed by then.

"Hasn't it become a conflict zone the moment the demon lords were summoned?" I asked.

"The higher-ups are worried about an all-out war. Since they're negotiating with the demons, they believe Rohen will be returned to them in a hundred years, and they're not wrong. If war erupts and Rohen really transforms into a conflict zone, the continent will rot for a thousand—no, more than ten thousand years," Chanelia replied.

"…"

"But we can't wait for them to finish their negotiations. The continent is already collapsing. Most importantly, I can't ignore the painful voices of my followers living on the continent," Chanelia added.

“…”

“We need a solution,” Chanelia said.

“…”

“The gods managing Rohen has to resolve the ongoing situation, not the higher-ups."

*‘That’s true.’*

“It's hard, but we need to overcome it,” she said.

*‘Right.’*

“We considered many things. We tested the possibility of sending myself, a warrior, or another god to descend and quell the chaos, but those weren't the answers that we wanted,” Chanelia informed me.

*‘I can’t give you an answer either.’*

"A-and that was when I heard about the story of Goddess Benigoa's continent. The story depicted the rise of a human being and how the continent overcame its hardships on its own instead of relying on the higher-ups.

"The story about how you drove out the demon lords and got rid of the Outer Gods. It's a story about those who earned the titles they deserved, and it's a story about how one individual became the symbol of the continent through their sacrifice and revival.

"Upon hearing that, we gathered more information and decided to use this continent as a role model for Rohen," Chanelia explained.

It made sense. If one wanted to solve a problem, it was a good idea to look around first to see if anyone else had overcome one's problem. It was probably more convenient for her to do things, as it was her home ground.

“Of course, it wasn’t easy to get access, but thanks to Goddess Benigoa’s grace, I was able to get some information. I was able to acquire more information about the incidents and stories that made this continent what it is today,” Chanelia informed me.

She met up with Benigoa and talked about this? I felt like I could imagine Benigoa being arrogant and showing off to her, but I set that thought aside for now, as I was interested in Chanelia Hermes’ story.

“We decided to take in the humans who have been abandoned in other dimensions,” Chanelia said.

“And we provided them with special abilities and items. We laid down a foundation that would allow them to become even stronger. We provided them with as much care and support as possible.

"At that time, the continent was so corrupt that it was basically in the worst state, but when the demonic lords started fighting over territory, I was able to buy some time. In some ways… it was great, but…” Chanelia paused.

“…”

“A huge variety of unexpected variables popped up. There are so many of them that I can’t list all of them right now…” Chanelia continued.

“Did the humans create their own groups and fight each other?” I asked.

“…”

“Yes,” Chanelia answered.

“And some of them probably sided with the demons,” I added.

“That’s correct,” Chanelia said.

“Some of them probably got into conflict with the denizens of Rohen… I’ll probably have to hear the details, but if the situation is at its worst, I can

think of several possible incidents. What percentage of the continent isn't under the demon lords' influence?" I asked.

"We're protecting only 42.1% of the continent. The demon lords' influence isn't that great at the moment, but…" Chanelia paused.

*'If they've been summoned, they won't be able to wander on their own.'*

It was the same for Belial. Maintaining their form alone was expensive. If a demon lord wanted to use their power to expand their territory, it'd shorten their time on the continent by an equal amount.

To stay longer, leaving it to the people was the wisest choice.

"*Ah*, so you want me to fix that mistake," I said.

"That's not what I wanted to ask you, God of Sacrifice and Revival," she said.

"…"

"I-I'll tell you the rest of the story I was telling you earlier. We started looking for the reason behind the repeated failures. We tried to see what made our continent different from this place," Chanelia continued.

"Okay."

"We came to a few conclusions, but in the end, we were able to find the closest answer," Chanelia added.

"…"

"It was the existence of a regressor. The regressor was the focal point," she revealed.

"?"

"After many sacrifices, we decided to turn one hero into a regressor, and we

were able to execute that plan in the end, so I want to ask you—”

*Bam!*

“D-Don’t make me laugh!” Kim Hyun-Sung screamed.

I turned and saw Kim Hyun-Sung breathing heavily with bloodshot eyes.

*‘What’s wrong with him?’*

*'What’s wrong with you? Why are you acting up?'*

“Don’t make me laugh, damn it!” Kim Hyun-Sung shouted again.

I saw malice in his eyes, and I got worried that perhaps he had eaten something bad.

# CHAPTER 1072
# PICNIC (35)

*'What's wrong with you?'*

"Mr. Ki-Young, this isn't worth listening to anymore," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"What?"

"I was wondering what nonsense she was talking about…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"…"

"Yeah, you guys have always been like that," Kim Hyun-Sung added.

"Excuse me?"

"You guys are selfish and self-centered scumbags," Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

"Calm down, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I said.

"I can't calm down, Mr. Ki-Young. They haven't changed at all. You don't need to answer her anymore. It was my fault for summoning her in the first place and letting her talk that nonsense…" Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

"What's wrong with you? Just calm down for now, and let's hear her out…" I suggested.

*'Is it because of what she said about turning a hero into a regressor?'*

Chanelia had practically pressed on Kim Hyun-Sung's reverse scale, as he was really against the word "regressor." Considering how much he had

suffered in his first and second life, I understand why he acted that way, but… wasn't he at the point where being a regressor was no longer a bad thing for him?

*"I'm going to become a regressor for you someday."*

Wasn't that what he thought?

"G-God of Sunset, I understand why you're angry, but I hope you realize that we got the regressor's consent before executing the plan. We completed the negotiations in advance, and there were no secret deals at all. There was also ample support," Chanelia said.

"…"

"Everything was done according to the protocols, and I can prove that. I can guess why you're angry. We understand that the regression process on this continent was unusual, and if I can apologize to you on behalf of this continent, I would," Chanelia continued.

*'Happy?'*

They hadn't forcefully turned him into a regressor, but Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't angry about that.

*'You're worried about me, right?'*

Naturally, he was staring at me.

If it weren't for my repeated sacrifice and revival, overcoming hardships, the victory I had achieved after those hardships, and my outstanding luck, Kim Hyun-Sung's only friend wouldn't be here.

The victory of the Saint of Sacrifice and Revival and the Sunset Swordsman had successfully driven out the Outer Gods. However, it wasn't achieved because we simply worked together. On the outside, it looked like a fancy and holy victory, but there were side effects to that victory.

My condition got worse day by day, and I even got amnesia as a side effect.

I even died once.

Considering that Kim Hyun-Sung had attempted to make an extreme choice…

*'I'm sure it wasn't an honorable victory for him.'*

The epic story wasn't an honorable victory for Kim Hyun-Sung; it was a story he wanted to avoid at all costs.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung," I said.

"I can't let you experience that again. Everything is over now, isn't it? We can't get involved with them again. You have no reason to offer them your help, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung argued.

*'What do you mean I have no reason? We need to make money.'*

"I don't know anything about other dimensions or continents, but you don't need to feel sorry for them, Mr. Ki-Young. They need to take care of it themselves. She came to you because she knew you're kind. They're no different from demons," Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

"…"

"Th-They're always forcing you to sacrifice yourself. That incident is over, but they're… doing it again. You don't know what else they're going to ask for after this is over," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"This choice was made by the administrators of Rohen alone and has nothing to do with the higher-ups, God of Sunset. On our end—"

"Do you think you're different from them?" Kim Hyun-Sung interrupted her.

"I swear on my name that the administrators of the continent aren't doing this for the sake of our personal safety," Chanelia answered.

"…"

"We simply can't watch our followers and creations suffer. We want to liberate them from their pain at any cost, even if it means making you angry. Even as we speak, Rohen is getting sick and rotting. My followers are starving and dying in a harsh environment," Kim Hyun-Sung continued.

"…"

"It's not that I'm unaware of the painful times you two spent and how hard it was to overcome those trials. When I was still human, I knew that creating legends and becoming qualified isn't easy for a mortal, especially achieving what you two…" Chanelia trailed off, not finishing her sentence

*'I don't think she's trying to make us take pity on her.'*

She sounded kind of sincere.

"As proof, we're prepared to accept any of your demands," Chanelia informed us.

I was sure she was being sincere, as she even gave us a blank contract. She had no other choice because if what she said was true, then Rohen was on the brink of destruction. Of course, they could wait a hundred years for the negotiations to end, but I was sure they simply couldn't throw away what they had created and built.

Among the higher-ups, I was sure there were those who simply used the dimensions as stepping stones, but there were definitely those who felt a strong attachment to their dimensions. It was highly likely that it was the latter for the continent of Rohen.

*'We might actually be able to take over that place.'*

Since they had lost trust in the higher-ups and we became their one and only choice, then taking over that place wouldn't be such a bad idea. Of course, the idea of dealing with three demon lords bothered me a bit, but as long as

our safety was ensured, it would be fine.

I had no intention of experiencing Kim Hyun-Sung's sensitive side again.

"No matter what the conditions are, I won't let you take advantage of Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"But God of Sunset, Rohen might be just the beginning. No one knows where they'll head after Rohen. If we don't drive them out now, they'll probably head—"

"We can think about that later and when it actually becomes problematic for us. Before that happens, it's *your* problem," Kim Hyun-Sung argued.

"God of Sunset, please consider it one more time," Chanelia begged.

*'I didn't know he was so good at declining.'*

I thought he was the type who couldn't decline other people's requests, but it seemed like he was stubborn when it came to something like this.

However, Chanelia's assumptions felt like they were correct. It was kind of suspicious that demon lords were working together. The more I thought about it, the more suspicious it became in my eyes.

Unlike the higher-ups, the demon lords weren't the type to work together.

It was strange that they weren't trespassing on the territories of the other demon lords and that they had gathered on one continent. There was probably some secret deal going on behind the scenes.

*'Does that mean we might be next?'*

While I was tapping my thigh in deep contemplation, Kim Hyun-Sung and Chanelia were arguing with each other.

Chanelia looked desperate in an effort to convince him.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung was determined not to send me to another continent.

*'It'd be kind of bad if I just agreed to do it.'*

I lacked information, so I couldn't give her an answer, but I decided to ask questions.

"Miss Chanelia Hermes," I said.

"Yes, God of Sacrifice and Revival," Chanelia answered.

"How… are the denizens of Rohen doing? Are they…"

Kim Hyun-Sung had to have realized that it was a dangerous question.

"Mr. Ki-Young!" he yelled.

"Please… let her speak, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I told him.

My saint characteristic would pop out when people least expected it. Even though we were talking about another continent here, the God of Sacrifice and Revival still loved it. I was worried about the denizens suffering in the darkness, even though I had never seen their faces.

Chanelia Hermes had to have realized that as well because she stared firmly right into my eyes and said, "They're dying."

"…"

"…" "They're dying. Their fleshly bodies and souls are starving and dying. The light of hope inside them is fading, and they're… they're no longer looking up at the sky," Chanelia continued.

"…"

*'It's making me sad.'*

“Their hearts are breaking…” Chanelia added.

*‘Oh no… ’*

“Their souls are in pain,” Chanelia said.

*‘That’s bad… ’*

“Some humans have decided to side with the demons and have been committing random acts of destruction and brutal massacres since then,” Chanelia said.

*‘Oh god.’*

“Th-They believe that the light no longer exists. They think the light no longer cares about them,” Chanelia added.

And that was when pure and sacred tears fell from the eyes of the saint who loved everything.

Chanelia Hermes saw me crying and added, “I just… want to return the light to them.” “…”

“I just want to tell them that the light of hope hasn’t gone out and that we still love and cherish them,” Chanelia added.

A holy tear dropped down my face.

*Drop.*

Two drops of holy tears as clear as purified water dripped down my cheeks.

*Drop. Drop.*

As the protagonist, my overwhelming acting skills gave Kim Hyun-Sung no chance to get angry and lash out.

“M-Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung stammered and took out a handkerchief.

"…"

"…"

"I-I'd like to help you right now," I said.

"Mr. Ki-Young?" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"If I could, I would abandon everything and jump right in, but as you already know…" I trailed off.

"Yes, I know that it is hard for you to get up and leave just like that. You have families who rely on you as well," Chanelia said.

*'Of course you should know.'*

"I would like you to send a formal letter first," I requested.

*'We have a lot to investigate and research on our side as well. More importantly, I need to find out what those demon bastards are up to.'*

"I'm sorry that I can't give you an answer right away, Miss Hermes," I said.

*'I need to know how we can help. If I can take our guild members with us, I want to know how many people can enter that continent as well as if there's an escape route if we end up in the worst-case scenario. I also want to know about the rewards they have prepared for us and when we can leave. We have to consider many things about this.'*

Also…

*'Information about the regressor.'*

I wondered if the Regressor Instruction Manual would work on them as well.

"Let's head back for now, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I suggested.

"What? But…"

“I need to spend more time with the guild members rather than spend time here. How about we all go out for a drink?” I asked.

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded.

“You too, Miss Chanelia Hermes,” I added.

# CHAPTER 1073
# PICNIC (36)

*‘He doesn’t look so good.’*

*'You look really upset.'*

*‘Lighten up.’*

*'Everyone is having fun, so why do you look so sad?'*

“…”

“…”

It had been a while since we had this kind of gathering with everyone.

Actually, we were going to do this earlier, but due to the Elias incident and Kim Hyun-Sung’s personal issues, it was delayed. It was late, but as soon as we announced there was going to be a group meeting, people came as if they’d been waiting for it.

The meeting took place in a small clearing where we could see the oasis in the desert at a glance. There were comfortable sofas, tables, barbeque grills, a magic freezer, and a makeshift tent that looked like a hipster had made it. Soon, people appeared one by one, and the atmosphere became pretty lively.

The only thing that was different from the usual meetings was that we hadn't commissioned the staffers to work for us. Instead, there was a huge outdoor kitchen available for us to use.

*‘When did they set this up outside? I’m sure they were contacted just a few minutes ago. When did they have time to prepare all this?’*

The large kitchen, which resembled a kitchen one would find at a huge restaurant, was on one side of the venue. It was a strange but interesting sight.

It was fun to see the guild members moving busily while cooking.

I wasn't sure who planned it, but everyone looked like they were having fun.

Han Sora was beside Ha-Yan and was teaching her various things, and Ha-Yan tried to meet Han Sora's expectations by doing her best with the mise en place. Strangely, I thought she wouldn't be good at it, but she was really good at handling the knife.

The sight made me feel like she had a knack for handling daggers.

"You're doing great… Miss Jung Ha-Yan," Han Sora complimented her.

"R-Really?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Yes. How… how did you do that?" Han Sora asked.

She was especially good at cutting the meat. The meat had already been prepared beforehand, so I couldn't really measure her true skill at the knife, but the sight before me was unreal.

She looked like she was randomly poking the meat with the knife and ripping them apart with her hands. It was like she was stabbing them for no reason… so how come the meat was prepared so quickly?

"I-It's fun," Jung Ha-Yan remarked.

Jung Ha-Yan's apron was covered in the organs of the poor animal, but every time she wiped away her sweat and smiled brightly, animal parts would manifest like magic.

It was to the point that I thought perhaps she simply teleported products from a supermarket. However, the dazzling light in her eyes made me think

that it wasn't the case. In fact, even Han Sora was surprised, so my assumption had to be wrong.

Still, it was an unusual sight.

Meanwhile, I noticed Alps and Belier running around frantically.

*'I actually pity them the most. I'm sure they hated the person who planned this meeting.'*

The staffers weren't here to clean up after them, and the two realized that they had to do it themselves.

Even Shiro was running around.

Seeing them run around frantically between the kitchen and the banquet hall brought tears to my eyes.

They quickly cleaned up the mess that Jung Ha-Yan had made and set everything back up again. They seemed worried that there was something from the banquet hall.

Rather than enjoying the party, it looked like they wanted to leave as soon as possible.

Sometimes, Sun Hee-Young would look quietly at them, and then they would either get up to set the table with some tableware again or move around.

Surprisingly, Ahn Ki-Mo was one of the people in the kitchen.

No one was watching, but he would either do a fire show or sprinkle spices in an exaggerated manner, which was very Ahn Ki-Mo-esque.

Park Deok-Gu standing in front of the large barbeque grill was chattering away while cooking the meal, while Colonel Smith was making cocktails like a professional. I heard people laughing from time to time, and even though everyone was enjoying the party, there was one person who looked like he

was at a funeral.

*'Lighten up, Hyun-Sung.'*

I saw him drinking alone on one side of the banquet hall as if he had just experienced the bitter and sweet moments of life.

*'You're acting really gloomy.'*

He was so gloomy that the guild members left him alone.

*'What's with that look? Why are you making it so obvious? People might think you came here after getting into a huge fight instead of coming to a party.'*

I knew he was angry because today had basically ended in a failure for him. The process was pretty fun, but as always, the result was the most important. The gift he had prepared went out the window, and the worst-case scenario Kim Hyun-Sung could ever imagine had unfolded before him in the blink of an eye.

To make matters worse, the reason behind it was the seed he had planted.

I understood why he was angry, but…

*'They must've fought.'*

*'Did they get into an argument?'*

*'Did something happen?'*

*'They fought when they went out.'*

I was bothered because the guild members were looking at Kim Hyun-Sung and me in *that* way. We were here for a party, but Kim Hyun-Sung was ruining the atmosphere.

After gulping down a glass by himself, he poured himself another drink. He

glanced at the oasis before downing another glass of liquor.

With a self-pitying chuckle, he looked at the glass and downed another one, seemingly in an effort to drown his sadness. However, it seemed that what he was doing wasn't enough, as he placed a palm on his forehead, showing everyone that he was in a bad mood.

The guild members avoided him as a result, except for Park Lian.

*'He can't even drink alcohol.'*

"You must not like alcohol, Miss Lian," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I don't really like it. It feels like I'm drinking rubbing alcohol, and it puts me in a bad mood," Park Lian answered.

"This tastes better than ordinary drinks, Miss Lian," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"…"

"I didn't like alcohol at first either, but after experiencing many hardships, it tastes like sweet juice," Kim Hyun-Sung added.

"I see," Park Lian said.

*'I really want to kick him out.'*

"Would you like to have a drink?" Kim Hyun-Sung offered.

"I'm sorry," she declined.

"You don't have to apologize. It honestly tastes better to drink alone," he told her.

"…"

"*Haha…*" Kim Hyun-Sung laughed.

*‘I’ll just leave him alone so he can get drunk fast and go to sleep.’*

Park Lian couldn't take it anymore and made a move. It was like a space-type magic was cast, as I could see Kim Hyun-Sung and the other guild members in the same room but not at the same time.

The guild members tried their best not to worry about Kim Hyun-Sung, and they even talked about him in the same room, which made it clear that Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Lian were in a different space altogether.

In the end, I had no choice but to turn to Park Deok-Gu.

If this awkward atmosphere was to improve, then Park Deok-Gu would be the best man for it.

"It finally feels like we’re on vacation! I feel relieved to see everyone in one place,” Park Deok-Gu remarked.

“You were too busy drinking, Mister,” Kim Ye-Ri chimed in.

“Drinking with the members of the Red Mercenary Guild and my family are two different things. Hey, Smith bro! Here's a lettuce wrap to commemorate your entry to the guild,” Park Deok-Gu offered.

“…”

“We had no time to hold a welcoming party, so I made you a lettuce wrap to compensate, Smith bro. Are you doing well adjusting to the guild?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Yes,” Colonel Smith answered.

“You don’t have to be so polite. No one thinks of you as a rookie guild member,” he told him.

“…”

"…"

"Got it," Colonel Smith answered.

Colonel Smith tried to grab the lettuce wrap, but Park Deok-Gu insisted on feeding it to him. In the end, Park Deok-Gu won the intense war of nerves.

"Hey, you guys should come over as well. We should cheer together," Park Deok-Gu suggested.

"Hold on. I just need to take care of this."

"We have another new guest along with Smith bro!" Park Deok-Gu said.

"I'm just grateful that I got invited," Chanelia said.

"I heard you're a leather craftsman. Do you make equipment and stuff?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"That's right. Some monsters' hides are harder than iron or rare metals, but it's very rare. I left behind several works," Chanelia answered.

"*Um!* I would like to hear the details. Do you have time?" Yoo Ah-Young requested.

"You are…"

"I'm Yoo Ah-Young, the blacksmith of the Blue Guild. If you don't mind…" Yoo Ah-Young added.

"So you're the craftsman of the Blue Guild. I should be the one making that request. The both of us will improve by having such conversations," Chanelia remarked.

"So regarding the leather…"

I was sure Yoo Ah-Young would obtain something from Chanelia, as I had

notified her about it in advance. Chanelia was happy about meeting another craftsman, and she was all smiles. She was doing a great job getting along with the other guild members.

She was doing better than Kim Hyun-Sung.

“O-Oppa, I made this,” Jung Ha-Yan offered.

“Really?” I asked.

“Would you like to try?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

Jung Ha-Yan sat next to me and showed me what she had made with Han Sora.

The new guild members and Shiro finally sat on the sofa.

After glancing at Chanelia, Lee Chang-Ryeol moved across from Kim Hyun-Sung and started drinking with him. Hwang Jung-Yeon and Kim Ye-Ri were moving busily for some reason, and even Jo Hye-Jin, who was eating meat at the grill, sat down, which meant all the guild members had finally taken their seats.

A noisy party started, and we ate the food prepared by the people here.

“It’s good,” I said.

*‘It’s better than I thought.’*

“R-R-Really?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“Yeah, it’s really good, Ha-Yan,” I replied.

*‘It’s really good. Why is it so good?’*

“Take your time, oppa. T-The night is long. Y-You’re going to have another drink with me in your room later, right?” Jung Ha-Yan asked as I drank some

wine.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan, Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Come over here,” Han Sora interrupted her.

They shared silly stories.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young, do you remember the time when we went on that expedition?” Sun Hee-Young asked.

“Of course, Miss Hee-Young,” I answered.

I could hear the others talking in the background.

“Then, when are you planning on holding a ceremony, Miss Jung-Yeon?” Alps asked.

“I’m not sure… we haven’t decided anything yet. Rather than rushing things, we want to take our time to decide,” Hwang Jung-Yeon answered.

*‘What the? Is Deok-Gu getting married?’*

“He said he wanted to make a special announcement for the sub guild master's sake,” Hwang Jung-Yeon added.

*‘Wait, really?’*

“Did he propose?” Alps asked.

“Yeah, he proposed here,” Hwang Jung-Yeon replied.

“*Haa…* I’m jealous. When will my other half appear?” Alps grumbled.

*‘Why didn’t this pig let me know about that?’*

*'What the hell?'*

Those completely drunk were now dancing.

“Sensual dance…” Kim Ye-Ri said.

*‘Don’t do that, please… ’*

People started talking and laughing for no reason.

“Now, it’s time to hear the guild master—I mean… the sub guild master’s toast. Please take a seat, everyone…” Ahn Ki-Mo announced.

Ahn Ki-Mo realized that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t in any condition to make a toast, but he was smart enough to hand the baton to me instead.

Everyone turned to look at me.

“I’ll just say a few words. I know it’s cliche, but I’d like to thank everyone who traveled all the way here to party. We experienced many things together, and we grew together—”

“Mr. Ki-Young!” someone shouted.

*‘Ah, damn it. This bastard.’*

I saw the extremely drunk regressor.

*‘Damn it, you… ’*

“Mr. Ki-Yoooung!”

*‘Someone… drag this guy out.’*

Perhaps he wasn’t confident about talking to me while he was sober, so he decided to use alcohol before telling me his thoughts.

“You… *hiccup*… you…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

“…”

“Yooou…”

"..."

"Why don't you understand my feelings, Mr. Ki-Young... Whyyy?!" Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

I could confidently say that this was the first time I ever felt like running away from a party.

*'Someone drag this guy out. Please.'*

*'Damn it!'*

# CHAPTER 1074
# PICNIC (37)

*'Someone get this guy out of here.'*

"Do you… do you know… how I feel?! You… of all people… should know," Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

"…"

"You're so cruel. Do you… do you really not understand why I did that? You knew, and yet…" Kim Hyun-Sung trailed off.

I really wanted to run away.

*'I want to get away right now, damn it.'*

A drunk guy suddenly intruded into the fun banquet hall, and he wasn't just any drunk guy. Normally, this wouldn't be a problem, as there was bound to be one or two people like him in a gathering.

Personally, I enjoyed resolving issues that occurred in banquet halls or parties, but I couldn't enjoy *this*.

*'What's wrong with him?'*

He wasn't just drunk. I was actually surprised that he could still walk.

Actually, the fact that he was drunk was absurd. Not even hard liquor made with holy power could make him drunk. He could get rid of the effects of alcohol with his mana, so the fact that he got this drunk meant that he wanted to get drunk.

He had no courage to express his true feelings while sober, so he decided to

get drunk.

It was like all he could think about was his disappointment in me and his grievances. His face was red, and his eyes were filled with resentment. His chin and figure were shaking, which made me think that he was trying to be courageous.

He was forcing himself to hold back his tears and complained about how I couldn't understand him.

Unfortunately, I had no idea how to resolve this issue.

*'Damn it. He completely ruined the mood.'*

"Mr. Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Yoooung… answer me!" Kim Hyun-Sung said, slurring.

*'You're really annoying.'*

"Please answer me… What am I to you? Am I… am I…" he paused.

*'What do you mean? You're Kim Hyun-Sung.'*

"How long… will it take… for us to spend time like this…" he questioned.

What if he ended up telling all the guild members about *it*?

Naturally, I started getting worried. There was a chance that he would do that, as he was talking incoherently. I had no idea what else he was going to say, but I eventually became convinced that there was no need for me to worry.

It was all because none of the guild members were listening to him. Even the kind-hearted Elena looked like she wanted to run away, while Ahn Ki-Mo stared off into the distance, knowing that resolving this was beyond his pay grade.

*'He's so annoying.'*

Colonel Smith always had a straight face, so I had no idea what he was thinking, but I was sure he was regretting his decision to join the guild.

*'Shit.'*

There was one silver lining, and it was the fact that Jung Ha-Yan wasn't interested at all. I was worried that she'd become nervous upon hearing Kim Hyun-Sung's words, but she seemed busy with Han Sora.

*'He's being really bold. He's really not in his right mind.'*

"Mr. Ki-Young!" Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

"Hey, bro. I think you're really drunk… so how about you calm down? You're really upset right now," Park Deok-Gu said.

"Let go of me! I have to tell you this today. I have to say it!" he yelled.

"No, you're too drunk right now! Why are you acting like this on such a happy day? If there's something you want to say, let's just be open-minded and talk. I don't know what happened between you two when you went out… but hyung-nim is shocked right now.

"The new members are watching as well, so you shouldn't be acting like this," Park Deok-Gu complained.

"I think it's best if we do as Mr. Deok-Gu had suggested, Master. You're drunk right now," Jo Hye-Jin chimed in.

"Mr. Deok-Gu… Miss Hye-Jin…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"Yes?"

"I have to say something to Mr. Ki-Young today," Kim Hyun-Sung repeated.

"Hey, today isn't the only day that you can talk to him! Come on, let's head inside! You're really drunk," Park Deok-Gu suggested.

Park Deok-Gu and Jo Hye-Jin tried to stop the runaway train, but…

“I’m… not drunk!” Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

*‘You’re drunk.’*

“I’m not acting like this because I’m drunk. You think I can get drunk? I’m! Not! Drunk!” Kim Hyun-Sung yelled.

“No, I’m not saying you’re drunk. You just don’t look so good today… Let’s not do this. If you want to have another drink, then—”

“Mr. Ki-Young! Mr. Ki-Young!” Kim Hyun-Sung interrupted Park Deok-Gu.

He was already out of control. The Jo-Park duo were trying to stop him, but it was going to be difficult.

Meanwhile, the guild members were just hoping that they wouldn’t get involved in this.

*‘It can’t be helped.’*

I had to move.

“Mr. Ki-Young! Move! Miss Hye-Jin! Mr. Ki-Young is…”

However, he wasn't in the right mind to talk right now.

I felt like he’d come back to his senses if I scolded him enough, but…

*‘No, that might not even help. He’s determined to make a scene. He’s not his usual self.’*

Why would he drink in the first place?

He knew I was going to get mad, and since he couldn’t win an argument with me while sober, he used alcohol before challenging me.

Normally, Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn’t do something like this. He’d cower before me even though he was angry. To ensure that he wouldn't do that, he decided to get drunk. In other words, getting mad here wouldn't be effective.

He had chosen to raise his sword rather than lowering his head, and he had armed himself before making that decision.

Between comforting him and confronting him, the former was better, no matter how much I thought about it.

“Mr. Ki-Young…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“You know that better than I do,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

“Let’s not do this here. I think we should go somewhere else,” I suggested.

The new members were whispering to each other, and they were scared. What would they think if the two pillars of the guild were acting like this?

*'Aren’t you embarrassed to show this side of you to them?'*

“I-I don’t want to,” Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

“…”

“I’m going to say it here, Mr. Ki-Young. No matter how much I think about it, I don’t think this is right… That’s right! This isn’t right!” Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

*‘More like it’s not right for you to act this way.’*

“Do you remember… how much you suffered… how much hardships you experienced to find peace?” he asked.

“I’m not the only one who suffered, so please go to sleep—”

“No! No! They don’t know—*sob!* how much pain you went through, and how much… you’ve suffered! But I know! The people living on this continent… don’t know anything. They don’t know what you've been through,” Kim Hyun-Sung interrupted me.

*‘You don’t know anything either, damn it.’*

“You barely managed to achieve this peace. I won’t let you lose this sense of comfort. You love and cherish too many things! Do you know… how painful that is for the people who cherish you, Mr. Ki-Young?! Your body doesn't just belong to you,” Kim Hyun-Sung added.

*‘What do you mean? My body belongs only to me, damn it.’*

“You should understand… how dangerous… and how unsettling that is! You’re selfish, Mr. Ki-Young. You’re extremely selfish!” Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

“What did you just say?” I questioned.

*'Did you just call me selfish? Do you have any idea how well I treated you? No, don’t get angry. Let’s not create more problems.'*

“I do… understand. I know what you’re thinking, and I know why you’re so passionate about this, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I’m also thinking about many things. Let’s head inside. Everyone is watching,” I told him.

*'I should pull his hand.'*

I tried to grab his hand quietly, but this jerk slapped my hand away.

“*Ah!*”

Had they realized that the situation was getting worse?

The new members saw it, but Jo Hye-Jin responded quickly and tried to bring everyone away. She knew that she couldn’t let the others watch their

guild master and sub guild master argue. Those with some experience went to their rooms while Park Deok-Gu led the drunk members away.

"I-I-I'll wait for you in your room, oppa," Jung Ha-Yan said as Han Sora led her away.

Kim Ye-Ri stared at us worriedly before walking away slowly. Chanelia Hermes—the culprit behind this mess—looked around worriedly, but she quickly went inside.

I was kind of angry, but in the end, I chose to reconcile with him.

I reached out to his arm again, and Kim Hyun-Sung looked away before pushing my hand away. He was even glaring at me. There was determination in his eyes, and they were telling me that he wasn't going to let things end so easily.

*'This jerk must be crazy.'*

"Not this time. Th-This is crazy. I won't let it happen this time," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*'I haven't made a decision yet, but if you look at it all, it's not as crazy as it sounds.'*

"…"

I reached my hand out again, but he moved away.

*'How could you do this to me?'*

*'I turned you into a regressor, gave you gifts, and even let you kill me. You think it's okay to act this way to me? So you're trying to become bold, huh?'*

"Mr. Ki-Young, they're only thinking about using you! They're just trying to use your kind… and warm heart. I know more about them than you, Mr. Ki-Young. I'm sorry for bringing Chanelia Hermes here. I know this is my fault,

but just this once…

“I don’t want to talk about this anymore,” I said.

“What?”

If confronting him and comforting him wasn’t the answer…

*‘Then the only thing I can do is ignore him.’*

That was the end of our conversation…

*‘I need to fix that habit of his, anyway.’*

I stared coldly at him as if I were looking at a stranger.

Then, I immediately turned around.

“M-Mr. Ki-Young?” Kim Hyun-Sung called out, sounding surprised.

*'Don’t you dare grab me. Don’t you dare.'*

With bold ambitions and footsteps, I walked away as if I was telling him that I no longer wanted to talk to him. I wanted to tell him that it was his fault, not mine.

I was sure he was sweating, and he had to have realized by now that he had made a mistake. He was definitely sober now, and he had to be thinking about how he could apologize to me.

Before anything else, he had to grab and stop me from walking away.

I was sure he wanted to resolve this before it became more serious, so he had to be thinking about how to say sorry to me.

He would follow me and say something along the lines of, *"It's my fault."*

He ought to grab me by now.

*‘What the…?’*

What was he doing?

*‘Is he still thinking?’*

I tried walking a little slower, but I couldn't hear him calling out to me or grabbing me to stop me from walking away. I couldn't hear the voice of the ungrateful regressor, and I couldn’t handle it any longer, so I looked back.

“…”

“…”

However, Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t there.

“…”

*‘You jerk. It’s over between us.’*

The dimension was vast, and he wasn’t the only regressor out there.

# CHAPTER 1075
# PICNIC (38)

*'It's really over between us, you jerk.'*

Kim Hyun-Sung was so annoying that I couldn't withstand him.

*'There's another regressor in Rohen. I can probably use the Regressor Instruction Manual on him.'*

At this point, I had no choice but to consider that. He slapped my hand away and called me selfish. Then, he had refrained from chasing after me. He was guilty of those three serious charges. If he were someone else, I'd cut ties with them and throw them far away.

*'Jerk.'*

This had already happened on that snowy mountain. If I were to talk about the seriousness of the situation, I'd say this one was way more serious than what had happened on that mountain.

"Hey… hyung-nim," Park Deok-Gu said.

In addition…

*'He didn't even send an apology text.'*

When I opened my eyes in the morning, I checked my hand mirror but saw no apology text from him. I wondered whether he left Laves, but Kim Hyun-Sung was still in his room. After I went into my room last night, he immediately went to his room instead of heading elsewhere.

I couldn't help but think that he was trying to bring me down.

“Hyung-nim, are you listening to me?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“…”

“Hyung-nim? Aren’t you going to eat breakfast? If you’re not going to eat that, can I eat it?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“…”

“Th-Then I’m going to eat it. Thanks for the food. *Mmhmm*… I don’t know why I can always eat so much food in the morning. *Ah!* About what happened yesterday…” Park Deok-Gu trailed off.

“…” “*Nom.* Don’t be too harsh on Hyun-Sung, bro. *Nom*. I don’t know what happened afterward, but you two looked like you were having fun while riding your griffons before all that mess. What if you guys fought over something petty? Maybe it wasn’t something worth fighting over.” Park Deok-Gu paused.

“…”

“And it seemed like Hyun-Sung bro drank a lot as well. Of course, I’m not saying that he hadn't done anything wrong, but I don’t think that what he did was *that* bad. He was drunk, after all. He *did* say some pretty harsh things… but he didn’t do anything that deserves a heavy punishment,” Park Deok-Gu added.

“…”

“It’s because he was drunk. I’ll tell him to cut down on the alcohol, so just forgive him. We’re on vacation, so we shouldn't be like this. We don’t have a lot of time left! We don’t have enough time to enjoy our time here, so nothing good will come out of being angry at each other!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

Right, I *could* be lenient with him.

*‘Since he was drunk… ’*

He couldn’t think properly because he was drunk. The punishment for crimes committed under the influence ought to be severe, but I felt like I had to forgive Kim Hyun-Sung, especially when he wasn't exactly mentally stable.

“Anyway, it was yesterday when I realized that Hyun-Sung bro isn't a good drunkard. Normally, he’d just sleep quietly whenever he was drunk… but it’s like he was possessed by something yesterday.

"It was to the point that I thought some sort of hypnosis spell was cast on him… I’ve never seen him act that way. *Nom, nom*,” Park Deok-Gu explained.

“Deok-Gu,” I said.

“Yes?”

“Stop making so much noise while you’re eating,” I told him.

“*Ah, ahem*, got it. Anyway, did you listen to what I said?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“I was listening. A bit,” I replied.

“They haven’t said anything, but I’m sure the new guild members are feeling really anxious. We just think of it as some sort of annual event but think about how anxious they must be when the two pillars of the guild were glaring at each other and were fighting.

"Even Ye-Ri looked nervous. She told me not to say anything, but this morning, she asked if you two had made up yet,” Park Deok-Gu revealed.

“…”

“Hyun-Sung bro must be regretting his actions… and I think he’s acting this way because he missed his chance to apologize, so how about you send him a text so he can apologize?” Park Deok-Gu suggested.

*‘Should I do that?’*

"…"

*'Yeah, I'm sure he made a mistake.'*

He was the type to wear his heart on his sleeves. I was sure he had slapped my hand away, called me selfish, and chose not to chase after me because he was trying to vent out the frustration within him. He was probably going to apologize to me soon.

The more I thought about it, the better Park Deok-Gu's words sounded in my ears sense, especially when he mentioned Kim Ye-Ri asking him if we had made up yet. At this point, I thought it wouldn't be so bad to create an opportunity for him to apologize.

The Kim Hyun-Sung I knew was slowly becoming more and more mentally mature.

I nodded and looked at my hand mirror.

[Do you have nothing to say about what happened yesterday? But don't think that things are going to be okay if you give just a simple apology like you do every time.]

"Did you send him a message?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yeah," I answered.

"He'll reply as soon as he sees it," Park Deok-Gu said.

"I don't really care. Let's eat," I said.

The text was marked as read, but I got no reply. He was probably thinking about how he ought to apologize, so I placed my hand mirror on the table, but it remained silent. Just as I started eating, my hand mirror rang.

I grabbed it, but…

[Jo Hye-Jin: Did you two make up?]

It was a stupid text.

“He’s probably still out because he’s hungover,” Park Deok-Gu said.

*'I shouldn’t have sent that text. It’s all because of this pig.'*

“I’m sure he’s going to send you a reply,” Park Deok-Gu added.

Park Deok-Gu had to have realized that I was glaring at him because he cowered. I had invited him to eat, as it had been a while since we ate breakfast together, but I had never imagined falling for his tricks.

However, he was too busy stuffing his face to notice my feelings.

The sight made me want to flick his forehead.

“*Ahem… ahem…*”

“What?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

Park Deok-Gu had to be embarrassed because he served me coffee with his head lowered. He looked like he was walking on eggshells, but he finally made a sound when breakfast time was almost over.

“Hey, Hyun-Sung bro is over there,” Park Deok-Gu pointed.

“So what?” I said.

“What do you mean?! He came here to apologize because you’re here. You said you texted him earlier! See, I told you!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

“So what? It has nothing to do with me. Just eat your food,” I said.

I could hear Kim Hyun-Sung's hurried steps, so there was no need for Park Deok-Gu to shout like that.

I assumed Kim Hyun-Sung had come here, as he couldn't think of a proper response to my text. Although I had decided to disconnect the Regressor Instruction Manual after what had happened yesterday, I could still feel his emotions without it.

*'He's desperate.'*

"Over here, bro," Park Deok-Gu called him over.

"Good morning, Mr. Deok-Gu," Kim Hyun-Sung greeted him.

*'Too bad. I don't plan on accepting his apology.'*

While I was imagining the scene in my head…

"Enjoy your breakfast," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"*Ah…*"

Kim Hyun-Sung walked past the table where Park Deok-Gu and I were sitting.

He went to the breakfast buffet and quietly placed his food on the table before him.

He looked indifferent, and he didn't even bother looking at me. After getting his food, he started reading the newspaper while chewing on his omelet. He was enjoying his morning and was casually drinking his coffee.

It was like what happened yesterday had never happened at all.

Moreover…

"You're here, Mr. Cheon Kwan-Wi," Kim Hyun-Sung greeted.

"It's an honor that you invited me, Guild Master of Blue. You said you wanted to talk to me, right?" Cheon Kwan-Wi replied.

“Let’s talk about it as we eat. *Ah!* You’re here, Miss Park Yeon-Joo. Miss Hye-Jin will be arriving soon,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*'Looks like he invited other people to breakfast.'*

It was then that I realized what he was trying to do.

*‘He’s challenging me.’*

When was Kim Hyun-Sung going to learn that he would always be the loser in this kind of fight? Of course, the situation had to have made him feel determined so I could understand what he was trying to do despite the odds.

He even showed me that he wasn’t willing to yield.

Now that I thought about it…

*‘I actually think that he has learned… ’*

Kim Hyun-Sung and I would argue quarterly, and every argument would always end with my victory. Of course, they were pretty trivial to be called arguments.

They were trivial things that were too embarrassing to list, and they would always be resolved in the same way and pretty easily at that.

Kim Hyun-Sung would give me a sincere apology, and it would end with me accepting that apology. I would receive many gifts during that process, but the gifts weren’t the important part.

The important part was the fact that I would always get what I wanted in the end.

Thanks to our numerous arguments, he had to have learned that fact—the fact that I would always get what I wanted.

*‘That’s probably what he’s thinking right now.’*

He wanted me to apologize first. Then, he'd accept the apology and use that against me to destroy my plan to go to another continent.

Of course, I could be wrong, as Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't clever enough to drink with that plan in mind and fabricate this ongoing situation. He had to have done all this out of fury, but I was sure that he learned many things from me.

"Something suddenly came up. Do you mind if I leave first, Guild Master of Blue?" Cheon Kwan-Wi asked.

"Mr. Cheon Kwan-Wi," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"It's really urgent. I received a call from Dawan… I'm sorry," Cheon Kwan-Wi replied.

"Then next time," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Sure. I'll do my best to make time for you," Cheon Kwan-Wi said.

In addition to Cheon Kwan-Wi, who had received an urgent call from Dawan, I saw other familiar faces. I found this situation to be pretty ridiculous because it was like he was showing off that he had many friends.

Most of them were famous adventurers and celebrities, but besides Park Yeon-Joo and Jo Hye-Jin, the rest of them weren't really that great. It was different when the Mist Summoner was there, but he was gone now, so the squad looked pretty useless.

*'He must be crazy.'*

"Deok-Gu," I said.

"What's wrong?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Bring Miss Chanelia Hermes to me," I ordered him.

"Right now?" he asked.

“Go get her right now,” I told him.

It felt like I asked the wrong person, but Park Deok-Gu still obeyed me.

“God of Sacrifice and—”

“You can just call me Lee Ki-Young while we’re here,” I interrupted her.

“Th-Then I’ll call you Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” Chanelia said.

“Okay. Can you tell me about the regressor in Rohen?” I requested.

“Yes, of course! The data hasn’t been organized yet, but if you give me some time, I’ll organize everything,” Chanelia answered.

“It’s fine. You can just give me what you have,” I said.

Naturally, I looked through the documents as if I wanted to attract Kim Hyun-Sung's attention. Instead of his stats, job, title, and personality, the regressor’s face was printed on the first page. I first noticed his blond hair and then his tan skin.

He had strange earrings all over his ears, and there was a huge tattoo on his shoulder.

Overall, he looked pretty normal, and he wasn’t exactly handsome…

*‘What’s with this guy?’*

“What do you think?” Chanelia asked.

“He's…” I paused.

“…”

He looked like a punk who had dyed his hair blond and got a tan.

# CHAPTER 1076
# PICNIC (39)

“His real name is Woo Hyo-Yeol, and he's twenty-three years old. Looks like he was summoned from Earth, and he looks like how you described him— *Ah!*

"He has a few more piercings. He has one on his tongue. You see the picture, right? Well, it doesn’t really matter,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

*‘Yeah, I see it.’*

I wasn’t sure why he took this picture, but he was making a peace sign with his hand and his tongue sticking out of his mouth.

*‘He’s probably a complete thug… ’*

“He’s described as a confident individual, but it's arrogance, not confidence, and that is his weakness. He’s probably an asshole, but of course, he won't write that on his resume. He’s haughty, and he thinks only about himself. It says that he prefers working alone.

"In his first life, he didn’t join a group or create his own clan… He’s only had parties a few times throughout his previous life, and it happened three times when he was just starting out as an adventurer. He no longer joined parties after he got used to the raids,” Lee Ji-Hyee explained.

“So it’s not that he lacks social skills…” I said.

“He doesn’t lack social skills. It’s more like he’s rejecting society. He’s different from Kim Hyun-Sung. I think he’s a guy who lives off of his pride,” Lee Ji-Hye continued.

“Why the hell did they turn him into a regressor? Did they not make him take

a personality test or something? Were they so desperate that they used someone with this bad of a personality?" I questioned.

"You should know the answer to that. I thought you asked Chanelia Hermes," Lee Ji-Hye replied.

I had no idea that the regressor was *this* bad, so I didn't bother asking.

Actually, I just wanted someone to talk badly about him with me.

"*Ahem, ahem.* His combat prowess is the reason behind he became a regressor. It's why he became the regressor of Rohen," Lee Ji-Hye said.

Chanelia told me that as well. The first reason they turned him into a regressor was because of his combat prowess—actually, it was the only reason.

However, I was sure Rohen had no other choice. To survive the chaotic continent, they needed someone who could fight the demon lords rather than take many things into consideration, and that was when Woo Hyo-Yeol caught their attention.

"Rohen is in the middle of their second tutorial. I don't know the details, but their tutorial dungeon seems similar to ours. The difficulty is slightly higher than ours, but rather than explaining this to you, I think it's best if you see it with your own eyes," Lee Ji-Hye said.

Ji-Hye noona tapped on the file, and a video was played on the screen.

*'It's not going to be a good reference material.'*

It was all because the monsters in the beginner's area couldn't possibly hurt him.

I had to be satisfied with just getting a rough idea of his prowess.

*'Even if that were true.'*

He was strong and with his own style.

Woo Hyo-Hyeol was surrounded by monsters. It was interesting to see him using two blades that were shorter than normal swords but longer than a dagger. Given the nature of the location, he had no other choice but to wield such weird weapons, but he looked really natural wielding them.

Of course, I wasn't an expert when it came to swordsmanship, but there was a saying that the sparrow near a school would eventually sing the primer.

I compared him to the sword experts I had met so far, and I couldn't say that he was inferior to them.

*'No, that's not swordsmanship.'*

The way he moved told me that this was just a simple fight. He blocked with one sword and attacked with the other. He repeated that basic routine, but his attacks were always fatal.

*'He doesn't have a form either.'*

He had no form, and neither were his swords moved in specific directions.

He was just moving based on his instincts, so I felt like I was staring at a beast. His flexibility made my jaw drop, and the sight made me question if he was even human. He dodged the enemy's attack by bending his back in a way that I couldn't understand, and he swung his sword in an incomprehensible way to chop off the head of his enemy.

His movements weren't optimized. An example of this was that he had no idea when to put his weight into certain moves, but he was pretty strong.

Woo Hyo-Yeol was smiling while bullying his opponents. He stuck his tongue out to provoke them. He would even throw his swords at them before lunging at them and throwing them away.

He leaned his head back so far that I thought his head was going to touch the

ground, and the sight made me feel like he was being too reckless. However, his sword swings even while rolling on the ground were pretty effective.

His every move was cruel and brutal.

*‘He’s a genius.’*

Compared to Kim Hyun-Sung, he was a different kind of genius. If I had to pick someone to compare him with, I'd say he was closer to Hee-Ra noona, but it wasn't the case at the same time.

If Cha Hee-Ra's Strength were beyond human standards, then Woo Hyo-Yeol abandoned every combat norm out there and used no swordsmanship nor art to fight. He was making his own techniques in real time.

Dozens of monsters collapsed in a pool of their own blood in just a few minutes. The result wouldn’t be any different, even if his opponents were human beings. The video playing next to the first video showed me that he had no issues dealing with humans.

His cruelty and brutality were actually more effective on humans.

*‘Damn it.’*

I didn’t want to acknowledge it, but…

*‘He seems useful.’*

*"Ahhh!"*

*"H-Help me! Please…”*

*"Run! Damn it! Run!"*

*"Haha. Idiots."*

*"Spare…”*

*"What? What did you say? I can't hear you. Say it again."*

*"Spare me… please…"*

Someone grabbed the hem of his pants and started begging for mercy, but he kicked their jaw and stabbed them without mercy. I had to fix that behavior, as what he had done was completely unnecessary.

*"Idiot. That's why you should've picked someone your own size."*

"I think he's useful as well. He does have power that matches his arrogance. Unlike Jung Jin-Ho, I don't think he's a psychopath, and I think he's indifferent toward other people as long as they don't pick a fight with him or get in his way.

"Of course, there are a few things about his behavior that have to be corrected," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"…"

"But he's the type of person I really don't like. You agree, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"He's the type of person we will never encounter in society. He's just a thug who wields dual daggers. I think he's wielding dual daggers because it looks cool," I answered.

"He's just a strong thug. Based on his personality, it'll be hard to ask for his cooperation. I think I finally understand why Rohen wanted your help. You're obviously a self-righteous person. If a thug like him becomes the leader of a guild and leads a group, the continent will never be peaceful.

"At least Kim Hyun-Sung is handsome. He's also charismatic and responsible enough for people to follow him. Unfortunately, this guy doesn't have any of Kim Hyun-Sung's qualities," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"Was Hyun-Sung… responsible?" I questioned.

“He does his best with his tasks. Anyway, we're still discussing how we can enter Rohen, and we need more information as well. Gela and Sahaga are working hard to take care of those, so I think you can just trust them and wait,” Lee Ji-Hye informed me.

“They must be useful,” I commented.

“Sahaga has experience managing other continents. I assigned it to him because I thought he was suitable for the role, and he’s handling it pretty well. He's actually pretty responsible,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

Ji-Hye noona was wearing a pair of sunglasses and was getting a tan in front of the oasis. She took a sip of her drink before continuing, “Of course, what we've seen isn't enough to determine what kind of person Woo Hyo-Hyeol is. That’s why I invited a guest so we can get more details about him.”

“Chanelia Hermes?” I asked.

“No, a member of your guild,” Lee Ji-Hye replied.

Before I could ask any questions, I saw a figure walking toward us.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young!”

“Elena?”

Elena was one of Blue Guild’s competent priests, and she was a High Elf known as the Daughter of Elune. Elena's emerald hair billowed in the wind, and she was dressed more extravagantly than usual. Perhaps it was because she was an elf, but the Desert Elves' traditional outfit suited her better than anyone else.

I thought it wouldn’t look good on her, as it was a different style from her usual clothes, but I was wrong.

“It’s been a while, Ji-Hye,” Elena greeted.

“You’re looking pretty today, Elena. You still have beautiful hair,” Lee Ji-Hye complimented her.

“Again with the compliments…” Elena muttered.

*‘What the? Since when were they this close? And when did they start talking casually?’*

“I called her out so we can have lunch together, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Is that okay?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Of course,” I answered.

“How’s the Continental Protection Management Committee doing these days?” Elena asked.

“It’s the same all the time. I actually want to quit, but they must have a conscience because they sent me here for vacation. How’s your older brother?” Elena asked.

“Don’t get me started on him. He’s been acting like nothing’s wrong… but I think he still hasn’t forgotten,” Elena answered.

Elena and Ji-Hye noona chattered away. They started talking about work and really personal stories, so it became clear that they had spent a lot of time together.

I was kind of surprised, as they kind of looked like best friends. Moreover, Elena seemed to be enjoying her company more than being in the Blue Guild. Although we were in the same guild and could be considered family, Elena was strangely estranged.

*‘It’s understandable. Is she at least close to Sun Hee-Young?’*

I was sure they had many things in common, as they were both priests, but sadly, Sun Hee-Young wasn’t the outgoing type. Actually, I thought Elena and Yoo Ah-Young got along, but I was taken aback to learn that she was so close

with Lee Ji-Hye.

“Are you enjoying your vacation?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“No. It’s because of my older brother…” Elena answered.

“Did something happen to Mr. Elias?” I asked.

“*Ah*, yes. Well, it’s a long story…” Elena said.

Obviously, we enjoyed our time together. Ji-Hye noona and I enjoyed gossiping, especially when we were gossiping with Elias’ sister. In addition…

“I think the guild master went a little overboard,” Elena complained.

“*Ha… haha*,” I laughed awkwardly.

“He's a self-righteous person. He’s not a bad person, but he finds it hard to break out of his own thoughts once he gets caught up in them," I said.

*‘We need to talk behind Kim Hyun-Sung’s back as well.’*

“He’s similar to my brother in that sense. It’s my first time seeing him that drunk, so I was surprised when I saw him… I’m sure there’s a lot of pent-up anger inside of him, but he was too—has he apologized to you yet, Mr. Ki-Young?” Elena asked.

“No, not yet…” I mumbled.

“He’s so mean,” Elena commented.

“I agree. He didn’t even send him a message, Elena,” Lee Ji-Hye chimed in.

“I see him in a different light now. I don’t know what happened between you two, but he should have apologized after that outburst… The things that happened when you two went out and the mistake that happened at the party are two different things, after all,” Elena continued.

Of course, talking behind Kim Hyun-Sung's back wasn't my goal here.

We talked for a while, and I felt my frustration being slightly assuaged. We talked about many topics as we walked through Laves, which I was actually getting tired of now.

We ate, drank coffee, and moved somewhere else.

When we sat down at a cafe, Lee Ji-Hye finally asked, "Elena, can I ask you for a favor?"

"A favor?" Elena asked.

"Yeah. A friend of mine wants to go on a blind date, but she wants to know what kind of person he is first. I brought a picture of him," Lee Ji-Hye answered.

"*Huh? Ah…* I don't mind helping you, but I need to see him in person rather than a picture of him," Elena replied.

"Don't worry about that. Can you take a look first?" Lee Ji-Hye requested.

"Looking into someone's soul isn't that easy… If a picture is all you have, don't expect too much," Elena warned.

It seemed that Elena had to see her target in person for her skill to be effective, so she warned Lee Ji-Hye not to have high expectations. However, Ji-Hye noona seemed confident as she gave Elena the picture.

"*Huh?*"

"…"

"*Hurk. Huuurk!*"

"…"

"*Bleeergh!*"

Elena threw up the food that she had just eaten.

"*Bleeeeeck!*"

# CHAPTER 1077
# PICNIC (40)

*'Is he that bad?'*

"*Euuurk…* I-I'm sorry," Elena said.

"…"

"*Oooop. Euuurk*. Excuse me… for a moment…" she said.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"Elena," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"I-I'm fine. H-Hold on… Ji-Hye. *Bleeergh…"* she mumbled.

*'Damn it, this is a mess. She almost vomited on me.'*

I stared at Elena's back, who ran to the bathroom while covering her mouth.

Lee Ji-Hye seemed a bit surprised by the sight. It appeared that she wasn't expecting to witness such a horrible sight.

"I feel kind of bad. I had no idea that things would turn out this way. I thought she was just going to frown," Lee Ji-Hye said, looking dumbfounded as she stared at the regurgitated food on the floor.

"You're right," I commented.

"Anyway, she showed us what we wanted to see. It's not that great, but… we can't use cliches and say that he's warm-hearted or something. I think Mr. Yoo Hyo-Yeol was born to be a thug," Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

“But… Elena’s opinion is involved, so maybe there’s a little bit of hope…” I said.

“Well, whether he’s a thug or not isn’t important. The problem is whether we can use him or not. People can be changed. If the request is about stabilizing Rohen, then whether there’s an issue with his personality or not doesn’t really matter…” Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

“That’s true. I think entering that continent is going to be similar to *Avatar*, and if there are limits, then things are going to be harder,” I told her.

“You’re talking about our stats getting nerfed, right?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

Whenever transcendent beings were summoned, they wouldn't be able to use their full power. If Kim Hyun-Sung were to go to Rohen, he'd only be able to use one-third of his might. Actually, it was highly likely that he wouldn't be able to use even a third of his strength.

We could increase our power to an extent through a sacrifice or just be prepared to take the penalty, but Rohen wasn’t in a position to tolerate that much bloodshed. More importantly, there was no way the administrators there would allow us to make a sacrifice.

“…”

Ultimately, the solution was…

“I think helping Yoo Hyo-Yeol grow stronger is the most reasonable method, noona. If they have a few more good ones there, we can just forget about him… but picking the one with the best combat prowess is the most reasonable choice to make here,” I told her.

“He doesn’t seem like the type that we can train. It’s better to let guys like him run wild. If you put a leash on him, he’ll just chew on it because people like him don't like leashes. He’s not like Kim Hyun-Sung, who whines but will still follow you around, asking you to grab his leash,” Lee Ji-Hye argued.

"…"

"*Ah!* Is that not true anymore?" Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

*'This girl.'*

"Who knew that a dog capable of looking only at his owner would become so stubborn? I guess he was a wolf, not a dog," Lee Ji-Hye added.

"…"

"Anyway, try to get Kim Hyun-Sung to calm down. He's always free, and we need to send him to Rohen no matter what. It's better to ask for his cooperation rather than forcing him to go. Don't let your pride get in the way; just talk to him," Lee Ji-Hye requested.

"…"

"Although I compared him to a wolf as a joke, Kim Hyun-Sung is only human. He's one of the few people you trust and rely on, and Kim Hyun-Sung relies on you the most as well. Have you considered the possibility that maybe you two simply aren't talking enough?" Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

"Where did that come from?" I asked.

"Not giving him any information or attention is probably comfortable for you, but at this point, you two need to talk. I guarantee it'll help with your mental illness… I'm sure it won't change overnight, but your relationships with others are pretty abnormal.

"If I were to give you a useless piece of advice, I'd say you have an obsession with being superior in your relationships. Will the world end if you lose once in a while? Are you scared of getting abandoned?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"…"

"I don't know if you had this trauma back on Earth or if it's something you

got after arriving here, but if you don't do anything about it, that obsession of yours will stay with you forever," Lee Ji-Hye added.

"What's wrong with you, noona? Are you going to open a psychiatric clinic or something? Stop saying strange things," I complained.

"Avoiding the issue isn't going to help either," Lee Ji-Hye retorted.

"Avoiding the issue, my ass. You worry about your own problems," I told her.

"You act mature sometimes, but sometimes, you're pretty childish. Anyway, turn Kim Hyun-Sung back to normal before you start working. I really feel like beating his ass these days," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"…"

"I'm going to go check up on Elena," she told me.

*'I don't like seeing him either.'*

She was having fun—no, it was more like she was pretending that she was having fun.

As I watched Ji-Hye noona leave the cafe while supporting Elena, I had no choice but to think about Kim Hyun-Sung's actions again.

*'That jerk is just a kid. He's old if I add the years he spent in his first life, but he's acting like a child despite that.'*

Kim Hyun-Sung was like a child who didn't want to play with the other children because he was upset. His actions didn't fit an adult man at all. He was acting like a child who was showing off that he had a lot of friends and that he could live happily without me.

His actions were pushing my buttons, and I was getting annoyed.

*'He must've learned from Rafael about how to tag people on his personal*

*account.'*

He was the king of learning. I was not sure about anything else, but it looked like his parents had taught him how to study properly.

When I opened my hand mirror, I saw him taking pictures with unimportant people.

He took pictures with the kids he suddenly started hanging out with yesterday, the next commanders of the continent, geniuses from somewhere, powerful adventurers from certain regions, undiscovered talents, and perhaps even my successors.

There were many of them. I was sure the self-proclaimed elite group, which was made up of three males and three females, had to have heard about me by now. The commander, strategist, administrator, supply officer, and all those working had a history of participating in the Mole Saint's Cozy Sanctuary.

*'They seem to be having a blast. I mean… when would they get the chance to hang out with the guild master of one of the three major guilds in Lindel?*

The God of Sunset had invited them to Laves to eat together and talk. I was sure that alone would help them with their resume, as that gathering was being held under the name of the Blue Guild's workshop or whatever.

The problem was that his actions were causing a problem.

There were rumors about how I was about to retire as well as rumors about how I had decided to leave the Blue Guild.

The Blue Guild was trying to recruit many talented adventurers. Thanks to that, Colonel Smith in charge of public relations couldn't enjoy his vacation and had to go back to work. Of course, that was what he wanted, but it was a sad incident for many reasons.

*'Who is this guy? Masaka Hiromi? Why are they posting updates so frequently?'*

[We discussed the future of the continent while eating with the Guild Master of the Blue Guild. It was tiring. I got upset, I argued, I laughed, and I had serious debates with talented and competent adventurers. It was a really fun time.

[It was also a time when I realized many things. Why were we summoned here? How should we accept and live on this continent as the ones who were summoned? It's something I would like to ask all of you. Omitted…]

*'It's a useless post.'*

However, they had many followers on Benigoa Net, as the post's "Likes" were going up in real-time.

*'I actually don't need to see it through this.'*

I could find them easily in Laves, after all.

"I see. In that case…"

"I noticed that some changes need to be made in the tactical manual. The capabilities and the importance of the powerful adventurers are increasing as we speak, so we now—"

"You're saying that we need a specialized training institution, right?"

"That's right. A few major cities are already building one. For example…"

"I think we still lack institutions. There are actually many people suffering from dungeon raid commissions and quests. Administrative staffers are considered weak in society. It's changing, but as their representative, I need to work hard to give them power."

They were just up-and-coming adventurers, so what were they talking about? I was sure Ji-Hye noona wouldn't want to see this. They were sitting on the terrace and getting heated up in a meaningless discussion.

Moreover, Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't said a word so far.

“The treatment of the production workers…”

“The Craftsman Guild is protecting them, but our administrative staff…”

*'A meeting there won’t change anything. It’s nothing but a meaningless meeting.’*

“Now that I think about it, I remember the battle in Zone 13. I was there.”

“*Ah*, I’ve read about it in books.”

*‘Now it’s time to show off. They’ll probably talk about which textbooks they saw it in or say that they've never heard of that incident.’*

“I can't believe the death toll… was only 20 twenty percent… It’s a phenomenal figure.”

“It was just a small battle, after all.”

*‘They said twenty percent, not twenty people. This is so funny, man.’*

“But it was really amazing.”

I felt like reality had finally struck Kim Hyun-Sung. He seemed to be questioning who he was and what he was doing here. When he saw me, he looked happy and started being kind to the group. Despite not saying a word up until now, he was playing along with them. It was honestly such an absurd and ridiculous act, but…

*‘A counterattack… ’*

I couldn't say that it was the right decision.

*‘I feel like I’m becoming childish as well.’*

I had great connections as well, but I wasn’t going to play along with Kim

Hyun-Sung.

I glanced over at him with a slightly sad expression and then walked away alone by myself. I tried to look as lonely as possible. I had to look like an outcast.

*'That's right, I was being treated as an outcast right now.'*

Laves was a vast, lively, and bright city, but Laves wasn't the place for me right now.

*'You abandoned me, damn it.'*

No one talked to me or looked for me.

I looked like I had been betrayed in the cruelest way by the person I trusted the most.

*'Jerk.'*

And just like that, I walked down the streets by myself. The sun was setting, and I slowly climbed up the stairs. Naturally, I looked at the sun that was setting slowly, and although it was a sight I used to watch with someone, I was now watching it by myself.

I was pretty sure Kim Hyun-Sung could see that my empty gaze was filled with so many emotions to the point that tears were about to burst out of my eyes. He could definitely feel the awful betrayal and sadness churning within me even without using the Regressor Instruction Manual.

The short moment felt like an eternity.

While I was spacing out, tears started falling down my face. The sunset I was watching alone… was depressing rather than beautiful.

*'Do you see it?'*

*'Do you see how I look, you jerk? Can you see the loneliness of your only friend whom you betrayed and hurt? I'm sad right now.'*

I was so sad that I was worried about collapsing right there and then.

I could no longer hide my feelings.

And just like that, I started collapsing…

# CHAPTER 1078
# PICNIC (41)

It was important to always look sad.

It was also important to pretend like I was okay whenever I felt someone's gaze on me, and I would never forget to add a hint of sadness.

It was a small change that people would go unnoticed by those unfamiliar with me, but those who knew me well would certainly notice it.

The guild members would certainly feel that something was off.

All I needed to do was look into the distance for a few seconds for the veteran members to notice that something was amiss. As for the new guild members, I just needed to make it a little more noticeable. Obviously, everyone knew why I was sad.

*'It's because of Kim Hyun-Sung.'*

It was all because of *that* incident. The incident that happened at the banquet hall. The incident caused a conflict between us, and it was clear that my actions had changed after that incident.

*'It's all because of Kim Hyun-Sung. He's the culprit.'*

My expression looked awkward, and my eyes were swollen from crying so much. My energy levels were low as well.

My actions told everyone the culprit's identity.

We were at the point where I looked lonely as I looked at the sunset alone, and Kim Hyun-Sung was out every day hanging out with people whose names I had never heard before. The victim and the culprit were clear, even

if one were to look at us from above while riding a griffon.

Under normal circumstances…

*'Playing politics with your acquaintances is the basics.'*

The guild members were walking on eggshells. Most of the guild members were waiting for this storm to pass without any other issues, while the veteran members were trying to get us to make peace.

It was clearly Kim Hyun-Sung's fault for disturbing the banquet hall after getting drunk, but I had no idea what he was going through.

The guild members had to have decided that it was better to just watch because there have been many times when we simply got over it. When the fight became a little intense, the reconciliation team would get dispatched…

*'It's possible… '*

Park Deok-Gu was in charge of me, and Jo Hye-Jin was in charge of Kim Hyun-Sung.

They visited us to tell us that we needed to be understanding of each other. They told us that we needed to reconcile, but how could they be fair in a situation like this? They were trying their best to mediate, but it was natural for one person to receive sympathy while the other would receive criticism.

— I have to. Say something.

— But… Miss Kim Ye-Ri.

— This isn't right. I don't know the details, but even if it's Ki-Young oppa's fault. This isn't right. This… this isn't right.

*'Yeah, that's what I'm talking about Ye-Ri.'*

— It was Hyun-Sung oppa who made the mistake first at the banquet hall.

— We don’t know what happened between them. We all know that the guild master will never treat the sub guild master like that. I thought there was a reason behind his actions, but now that I think about it, the guild master was out of line.

— I think the guild master was a bit rash this time as well. He *did* make a mistake at the banquet hall, but I couldn’t understand his actions after the incident… I’m disappointed by how he handled it afterward.

— I knew. You were going to think that way, Jung-Yeon unni.

— Yeah, you’re right. My Deok-Gu got so angry that I had a hard time trying to calm him down. He probably felt really bad for my brother-in-law. He’s pretending to be as happy as possible… but I think he didn’t get any sleep last night as well.

*‘I became her brother-in-law without even knowing it.’*

— I just. Can’t understand it. I’m going to go tell him today. I can’t watch any longer.

— Well, if that’s what you want to do… I won’t stop you, Miss Ye-Ri… but I don’t think the guild master will back down so easily this time.

*'You grew up to be such a fine young lady, Ye-Ri. I’m so proud.'*

The others weren't all that different.

— Excuse me, Miss Alps.

— Yeah?

— Do you think things are okay between the sub guild master and the guild master?

— I-I’m not sure. It’s my first time experiencing something like this as well. I’ve heard them arguing or fighting from time to time, but it’s my first time

seeing them in such a serious situation. Miss Park Lian also said I should be careful about how I act because the mood isn't that great right now…

— It must've been her first time experiencing a tense situation like this. You have to be careful as well, Belier.

— I-I will. B-But Miss Alps, was it the guild master's fault—

— No. Don't say it even if that's what you think. That's what I think, too… but we just need to wait until this incident passes. Miss Jo Hye-Jin seems to be working hard as well.

— *Woof! Woof!*

— Shiro! You be quiet as well.

— *Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!*

— You can't bark like you did last time when the guild master walked past us, got it?

*'People are already on my side, including Shiro.'*

Deok-Gu had been constantly requesting a one-on-one talk with Kim Hyun-Sung, and I remembered Jo Hye-Jin saying that she had met him multiple times.

*'I really didn't need to go this far with politics.'*

Kim Hyun-Sung was already in a desperate situation. I thought the scene of me coming down with an upset face after watching the sunset by myself would work, but I had no idea that it would be *this* effective.

*'Yeah, it should work.'*

On the outside, he looked determined like before, but I could tell that he was mentally unstable. Not only was he looking at his hand mirror several times

a day, but I saw him glancing over at the door to my room from time to time with a worried face.

Kim Hyun-Sung had created that ridiculous plan so that his friend wouldn't be in pain any longer. He had to cause pain so that I wouldn't be in pain, and I was sure he was doubting his plan by now.

He seemed to have realized that he had gone too far to go back to how he used to act.

"O-O-Oppa, are you okay?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Of course I'm okay. I feel relieved because you're here with me," I answered.

"R-Really?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Yeah, and these aren't just empty words," I told her.

One thing I wanted to praise Kim Hyun-Sung for was that he hadn't talked about Rohen to the guild members.

*'At least he's keeping* her *a secret.'*

I wasn't sure if it was because he wanted to take care of it himself without telling the others or if it was because I told him not to tell the others, but Kim Hyun-Sung remained quiet about the root cause of the issue.

I was also not sure if it was all because he had decided to take on the role of a villain or if he simply didn't want to put me in an awkward position, but I appreciated Kim Hyun-Sung's silence.

"W-Wait here. I'll bring you food," Jung Ha-Yan offered.

I nodded at Jung Ha-Yan's kindness before looking at Kim Hyun-Sung through my Telescope. He was still staring at his hand mirror seriously while sitting at a table alone.

— *Whoo…*

He sighed. He glanced at his hand mirror again and placed it down.

*'I don't think he'll reply even if I send him a message… '*

— Damn it…

*'He probably thought I was going to show some kind of reaction. You think sending a message will resolve everything?'*

— Damn it!

For some reason, it was embarrassing seeing him grab his head as if he were suffering from a headache. He was overreacting so much that I thought he was the perfect personification of the word "melodrama," but thanks to his handsome appearance and serious gaze, it was a sight worthy of watching.

After forcing himself to look away from his hand mirror, he looked at a cabinet.

— *Whoo…*

What he took out from the cabinet was the hard liquor that made him drunk last time.

— I didn't drink that much… even in my past life.—

*'This jerk.'*

It seemed like he had no idea that the alcohol was the reason behind his bizarre behavior on that night, and it was proven by how he had decided to drink alcohol while acting like he was the pitiful one here.

*'I need to make him stop drinking.'*

When I saw him deliberately making himself drunk, I couldn't help but

question if he was the same guy whom I had picked to become the regressor.

— *Whoo…*

If I had known that he was an alcoholic, the Masked Hero wouldn't have picked him as well.

"O-Oppa, S-Sora, come eat. The food is ready," Jung Ha-Yan announced.

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan…" Han Sora mumbled.

"…"

"I'm crying… You're now… cooking for us, Miss Jung Ha-Yan," Han Sora continued.

"*He… hehehe…* It's nice that we're all gathered like this," Jung Ha-Yan remarked.

"It's really delicious, Miss Jung Ha-Yan," Han Sora said.

"W-What do you think, oppa?" she asked.

"I agree with Sora…" I answered.

"…"

"…"

"H-Hang in there, oppa," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"She's right. It's not your fault," Han Sora chimed in.

"Hyun-Sung oppa… was acting kind of m-mean," Jung Ha-Yan remarked.

"No, we just had a bit of a misunderstanding… It's nothing to be worried about, Ha-Yan," I told her.

“L-Let me know whenever it gets hard,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

*‘What will you do if I tell you?’*

*'You’re making me nervous.'*

*‘I shouldn’t act like this here. Ha-Yan and Hyun-Sung might end up fighting at this rate.’*

I had no plans of watching the clash of the world’s strongest adventurers, so I pretended like I was okay. When I told her that I had been relying on her during the hardest times of my life, she felt a little better and started enjoying the food.

*‘Damn it.’*

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung was still drinking the hard liquor.

Once we were done eating, Jung Ha-Yan suggested, “S-Sora, you should sleep here."

“What?”

“A-A staff said they’ll bring an extra bed,” she informed her.

“*Ah*… I see. But… how could I… H-How—when you…” Han Sora stuttered.

“Still…”

Kim Hyun-Sung continued to drink his hard liquor even after the commotion in this room was over.

*‘What time is it?’*

*'He’s still not drinking, is he?'*

[Mr. Ki-Young… are you sleeping?]

He texted me a few hours ago.

Soon, I heard his loud voice, and I couldn't help but frown.

*Bam! Bam! Bam!*

"Mr. Ki-Young… are you sleeping?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"…"

"Mr. Ki-Young! Are you sleeping?! Are you there?!" Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

*'That drunk behavior of his is going to become a habit at this rate.'*

The snoring Jung Ha-Yan got up and exclaimed, "*Eek!*"

"Mr. Ki-Young! There's something… I want to tell you. There's something—"

"G-Get out of here!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

"Miss Ha-Yan, I'm really sorry for coming so late at night, but there's something… *hiccup*… I need to tell… Mr. Ki-Young…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Y-You're being rude! A-And you're drunk! O-O-Oppa is sleeping right now!" Jung Ha-Yan told him.

"*Hiccup.* Mr. Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young… I just… I just need a moment," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

*'Ack, his drunk behavior is really annoying.'*

# CHAPTER 1079
# PICNIC (42)

It was exactly 2:33 A.M. People were usually emotional these times, and people wouldn't feel guilty even if they started banging on someone else's door while drunk.

Kim Hyun-Sung was mumbling and slurring his words. He sounded like he wasn't feeling guilty at all.

"Y-Y-You're being really rude!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

"I'm sorry… *hiccup*. I'm sorry, Miss Ha-Yan. I just need—"

"Y-You're s-s-so rude! I-I really didn't find you to be that kind of person… L-Leave! Right now! W-W-Why are you so inconsiderate?!" Jung Ha-Yan interrupted him.

"Miss Ha-Yan… it's not like that," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I-If there's something you want to say to oppa, come back tomorrow morning! H-He's already suffering… H-Have some shame," Jung Ha-Yan scolded him.

*'Why do you keep stuttering? You're too upset, Ha-Yan. Calm down.'*

"I'm… sorry. I'm sorry, Miss Ha-Yan," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Th-This is absurd. I'm not the one… you shouldn't apologize to me!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

"Miss Ha-Yan, that's why I want to… apologize… right—"

*'This jerk really doesn't want to leave. He's just going all out. I need to take*

*care of his drunk behavior before anything else.'*

He was acting like a typical drunkard. He wasn't acting like the hero who had saved the continent. Who would think he was the God of Sunset? If it weren't for his face, which was as red as the sunset, I wouldn't recognize him.

He looked like he was soaked in alcohol, and his blank stare told me that he wasn't in his right mind.

*'I think he's more drunk right now than on that day.'*

I couldn't imagine just how much he ended up drinking. He was a swordsman, so he had to have drunk an unbelievable amount of alcohol. He was stumbling and was leaning on the wall for support.

It was strange to see him put so much effort into trying to enter my room.

He kept hiccuping, and his eyes were filled with tears as if he were going to burst into tears anytime soon. I was worried he was going to start wailing loudly. I confirmed that he started drinking around six o'clock, so this had to have been going on for eight hours now…

*'How is he going to fix this tomorrow morning?'*

Actually, I expected him to faint and not remember anything the next day.

"Mr. Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young…" Kim Hyun-Sung called out.

*'How come he's so pathetic?'*

I thought I had seen Kim Hyun-Sung at his lowest point, but there was definitely a deeper abyss hidden within him.

"I think I was wron—*oop!*" Kim Hyun-Sung said. "So what I'm saying is that… right now…"

*'This is… '*

What I found interesting was that I realized that Kim Hyun-Sung was a superior being. I never imagined that the handsome man would appear here either, but seeing his drunken state reminded me of a protagonist. If an ordinary person acted like that toward me, not only would I dislike them immediately, but I would have already called security.

I finally understood why people cast beautiful women and handsome men for the leading roles. If he were Park Deok-Gu instead of Kim Hyun-Sung— Actually, Deok-Gu had a cute side to him. If it were some drunkard acting like that toward me…

*'The play would become too realistic.'*

Meanwhile, the situation was reaching a climax. The people in the other rooms came out due to the noise.

"Master, you're really drunk," Jo Hye-Jin remarked.

"Miss Hye-Jin, there's… something I really need to…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"Master… I'll take you to your room," Jo Hye-Jin offered.

"Bro, stop it and head to your room, all right? You shouldn't be acting like this in the middle of the night. I understand how you feel… but today isn't the only day you'll get the chance… to apologize.

"If you want to apologize, you should do it when you're sober… and in a serious manner… Stop behaving like this.

"Hey, get a hold of yourself, all right? Do you really think this situation is okay? Making a mistake once or twice can be considered a mistake. What if hyung-nim sees you in this state…" Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

*'I'm glad the new members are on a different floor. Same goes for Ye-Ri.'*

If he ended up acting like that in front of Alps and Belier, he would look bad

as the guild master. Hye-Jin and Deok-Gu had witnessed all the bad and good things, so I was glad that they were there to stop him.

“H-H-He’s right! Come back tomorrow morning when you’re sober,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“I-I-I’m more alert now than ever. Please trust me,” Kim Hyun-Sung begged.

“Don’t be like this…” Park Deok-Gu muttered.

“I’m thinking more reasonably than ever,” Kim Hyun-Sung added.

I was sure he had no plans of showing this side of himself to the second-generation members of the Blue Guild, like Yoo Ah-Young, Lee Chang-Ryeol, and Han Sora.

Han Sora had to have realized that getting involved in that situation wasn’t part of her role, as she stayed in bed and looked at me with her large eyes.

*‘It reminds me of the past.’*

I could still remember the time when we would pretend to be asleep and stay in our room whenever we heard loud noises outside. It seemed Han Sora was feeling something similar to that.

The right thing to do here was to wait for this storm to pass.

“Aren’t you going to go outside? S-Sir?” Han Sora asked.

“I should, but a little later,” I answered.

“*Ah…* okay,” she said.

“You should head out there first, Miss Sora,” I suggested.

“What? But what can I—”

“That’s for you to decide,” I told her.

“I-It’ll be resolved if you go out there,” Han Sora argued.

“The protagonist usually appears last,” I told her.

“What… do you mean… What if the guild master puts the blame on me?” Han Sora asked.

“Ha-Yan is there, so what are you worried about? Whether he blames you or not, you’re just doing your job. He won’t even remember those who stopped him, so hurry up and go out,” I told her.

“I-I don’t know. The guild master seems…” Han Sora paused.

“Yes?”

“Kind of scary,” Han Sora continued.

“Just go out there. If you’re too scared to stop Hyun-Sung, pretend to stop Ha-Yan,” I suggested.

Obviously, the situation wouldn't change even if Han Sora went out, as Kim Hyun-Sung was still throwing a tantrum. Han Sora’s job was to control Jung Ha-Yan so that she wouldn’t get too upset.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Calm down!” Han Sora screamed.

“Sora! L-Let go of me! T-This isn’t right! It’s been a while since we had such a peaceful night!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

*‘So that’s what you were upset about.’*

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Please don’t do this!” Han Sora begged.

“*Woof!*”

*‘Even Shiro is getting involved.’*

“Mr. Ki-Young! Mr. Ki-Young!” Kim Hyun-Sung yelled.

"*Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!*"

The situation was becoming even messier because Shiro was barking at the drunkard. At this point, we needed a different method to suppress the drunkard, who was being persistent even though so many people were trying to stop him.

"What… I want to…"

"*Woof! Woof! Woof!*"

It was time for me to make an appearance.

"Ki-Young…"

I looked in the mirror and fixed my outfit. Then, I got up slowly and headed outside.

It was like time itself had stopped because everyone went quiet. Everyone felt my presence, and they all looked at me. I looked like I was suffering. My eyes were slightly swollen, and my gloominess overwhelmed the atmosphere.

"G-Go back to your room, hyung-nim. I'll take care…"

I shook my head at Park Deok-Gu's words.

"O-Oppa…" Jung Ha-Yab muttered.

Shiro came up to me and rubbed his head on me. The sight made me think that it was worth giving him all those snacks. However, I had no choice but to ignore him because my goal was the drunkard before me.

"M-Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"You're really drunk," I said.

“I am…” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

“Why did you drink so much?” I questioned.

Instead of scolding him, I decided to comfort him.

I didn't bother asking him why he didn’t apologize after all the trouble that he had caused, why he spent time with those rookies, and why he had been ignoring me since that incident.

I also didn't bother asking if it was really necessary for him to make me feel miserable…

I talked to Kim Hyun-Sung without asking why he hurt me.

My voice sounded normal, but it contained many emotions.

“Mr. Ki-Young… there’s something… I really wanted to tell you,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“…”

“I… always… remember,” he said.

*‘Remember what?’*

“I’ve been keeping in my heart… the things you said… about carrying my burden with me… and that I no longer need to take responsibility alone,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

I smiled weakly.

“I want to… be your strength as well, Mr. Ki-Young. I want to share your responsibilities and obligations, Mr. Ki-Young. I wanted to love the things you loved and support the things you wanted to do, but…” Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

"…"

"I… I must be an asshole. *Heuk… kgh…"* Kim Hyun-Sung cried.

Even Shiro went silent upon hearing that.

*'Hey, don't cry. Why are you crying?'*

"I must be a bad person. I-I want to carry the burden with you as well, but… I… I'm scared of many things. I'm afraid of many things. I don't know if my choices are correct…" Kim Hyun-Sung confessed.

"…"

"I'm afraid that I might make a mistake and something bad will happen… I've had so many experiences where I messed things up… I… I must be weak. *Heuk…* I don't care what happens to me, but…" Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

He was rambling on, so I had no idea what he was saying, but I had an idea as to what Kim Hyun-Sung wanted to say. He wanted to support my decision, but he was scared to do so, as he was afraid that something bad was going to happen to me.

The members seemed to sympathize with his sincere confession because everyone was silent, but…

"Please don't do this here. Go sleep for now. I have an idea as to what you're trying to say… so let's continue this conversation tomorrow morning," I suggested.

"Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"You're really drunk," I told him.

"I'm not acting like this because I'm drunk…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Let's talk again tomorrow. And stop… drinking," I said.

“What?”

“I think it’s best… if you stop drinking from now on,” I suggested.

“Okay, I won’t… drink again…” Kim Hyun-Sung confirmed.

“You promised,” I said.

“Yes, I promise. It’s a promise,” Kim Hyun-Sung repeated.

“Go sleep,” I said.

“…”

Perhaps that gave him a sense of relief, but the bedraggled Kim Hyun-Sung closed his eyes and eventually fell asleep.

*‘I calmed him down with one shot.’*

“Hyung-nim, about Hyun-Sung bro…” Park Deok-Gu muttered.

“You move him,” I ordered.

“…Okay. I had no idea that he’d act this way… Anyway, you did well. I’ll be sure to tell him not to behave this way again, so don’t worry about it,” Park Deok-Gu reassured me.

“No, you don’t have to tell him… Anyway… Ha-Yan, let’s head inside,” I suggested.

“*Huh?* Okay, oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

Kim Hyun-Sung probably thought that it was all over.

“*Woof!*” Shiro barked.

The thought that we were going to make up tomorrow probably helped him sleep soundly. Kim Hyun-Sung was sleeping happily with a smile on Park

Deok-Gu's back. He seemed certain that all conflicts had been resolved.

I was not sure whether he'd remember this or not, but he looked really happy right now.

*'He must be thinking that it's over.'*

However, I was narrow-minded, so I wasn't going to meet him for a while. Definitely not.

How?

*'I'll go to Rohen before this jerk wakes up tomorrow.'*

# CHAPTER 1080
# PICNIC (43)

I[1] felt something warm. When I opened my eyes slowly, I saw the sunlight shining brightly into the room. It felt like I had been asleep for a really long time. It seemed so surreal to the point that I questioned if I was still dreaming, but a thought popped into my head, waking me up.

I looked around the room and saw that it was slightly messy.

The first thing I saw were the liquor bottles all over the place. Not only were there empty bottles on the table, floor, and on one side of the bed, but there was unidentifiable trash stacked on one side of the room. To make things worse, there were traces of destroyed furniture, making it seem like a beast had been living here instead of a human being.

*'I'm right.'*

I couldn't help but think that I was right because it was not an exaggeration to say that I had really been living like a beast over the past few days.

"…"

"…"

*'I'm an ungrateful jerk.'*

I couldn't understand why I acted that way.

If I had to give an excuse, I'd say that I had no choice but to be stubborn, as I couldn't resolve the issue through ordinary methods. Going to another continent to save those suffering was something I couldn't understand at all. We had sacrificed so much to achieve this peace, and saying that the God of Sacrifice and Revival had saved the continent wasn't enough.

It could be said to be a happy ending, but we had to sacrifice and give up many things in exchange for it. Everything seemed perfect, but it was still rotten and bruised on the inside due to the many hardships that we had to go through.

For those who had gone through those hardships, the present was a time for them to recover from that pain. Unfortunately, he had to walk on the path of hardship again because of those damned Templars, who I really wanted to tear to pieces, but even doing that would certainly not satisfy me at all.

Saying that he had to walk on a similar path as before, that he had to walk on the thorny path, and save the continent with another regressor… No matter how much I thought about it, I just couldn't understand why he was willing to do that.

Thus, I believed it was natural for me to be upset.

The problem was that I had expressed it the wrong way. I had made a mistake.

"Mr. Ki-Young," I mumbled. He was a strong but fragile person. He'd always smile as if nothing was wrong, but he suffered more pain and suffering than anyone else. After hearing the story from Chanelia Hermes, I was sure that story had been on his mind all this while, and he had been suffering more than anyone else from it.

Lee Ki-Young was a man born to love everything, and he couldn't ignore other people's misfortune and pain. His every action resulted in goodness, and he was always giving joy to the world, delivering it from pain.

When he heard Chanelia's story, I was sure Mr. Ki-Young was more confused than me.

He was always beside me whenever I was going through a hard time.

*'But I couldn't do the same for him… '*

I was embarrassed to call myself his friend. I had ignored and rejected him. Not only had I refused to carry the burden with him, but I had probably increased his burden.

I had ignored him when he watched the sunset alone and pushed himself to his limits. Despite knowing that he had no one to lean on, I had turned a blind eye to him, which probably pushed him over the edge.

“I’ll talk to him again,” I said.

*'Yeah, I’ll do that. He did say… he wanted to talk again today. I was embarrassed by what I did yesterday, but… '*

*‘It’s a good thing I was being brave.’*

It was a disgraceful and messy method, and I couldn’t remember exactly what I said because I was drunk, but I was able to convey my feelings. I realized too late that the solution was to talk it out rather than engage in a cold war.

*'It’ll be difficult to come to an agreement… but if we talk it out, I might be able to find another way. I’m sure there's a way to satisfy both parties.'*

I got up quietly to clean up the empty bottles in my room. I remembered Mr. Ki-Young telling me to quit drinking. I smiled bitterly and couldn’t help but think that it was thanks to them that we were able to reconcile.

[Mr. Ki-Young, I’m really sorry about yesterday. There are many things I want to tell you, and I want to talk to you about them face-to-face. There are things I haven’t told you yet… and I’d like to… officially apologize to you. If you let me know when you’re available, I’ll definitely visit you.]

After sending the message, I waited for a reply, but he hadn't read the message yet.

I was sure he’d reply late, as he hadn't gotten any sleep yesterday. Of course, it was all my fault. I went to the bathroom to wash up. As I thought about

how to apologize to him and talk to him about Rohen, time flew by quickly.

*'Right, Chanelia Hermes.'*

She was here.

I had some time left, so I thought it'd be better to hear more about Rohen from her than spend my time here mulling over my own thoughts. I wasn't the type to take charge, but I could offer help through other means.

I went outside and saw a familiar figure.

*'Jo Hye-Jin.'*

Naturally, my actions last night popped up in my head. Jo Hye-Jin seemed to have remembered what had happened yesterday as well, as she flinched at the sight of me.

However, she greeted me as if nothing had happened.

"Miss Hye-Jin… and Miss Alps, hello," I greeted.

"*Woof! Pant, pant, pant! Woof!*"

"H-Hello, Master," Alps greeted.

"Did you sleep well, Master?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"I did, Miss Hye-Jin. I know this is sudden… but do you know where Miss Chanelia Hermes is?" I asked.

"*Woof! Woof!*"

"I believe she's still in her room. What business do you have with her?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"There's something I need to discuss with her," I answered.

“I’ll contact her,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“Please tell her that I’ll be waiting in my office,” I informed her.

“Okay.”

“Also…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“I’m sorry about yesterday,” I said.

“It’s fine, Master,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“…”

“You shouldn't apologize to me…” Jo Hye-Jin replied.

“You’re right. I plan on apologizing to Mr. Ki-Young as well. I’m ashamed for making a fool of myself in many ways to Mr. Ki-Young, to you… and the other guild members,” I told her.

“…”

“…”

“Master,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“Yes?”

“Everyone is bound to make mistakes,” Jo Hye-Jin continued.

“Th-Thank you for telling me that,” I said.

“I’m sure the sub guild master has forgiven you,” Jo Hye-Jin said, reassuring me.

I headed to my office, and I saw Mr. Ki-Young’s room on the way there.

However, I knew that I couldn’t knock on his door.

*‘I’m sure he’s exhausted.’*

He’d probably wake up around lunchtime.

Soon, my hand mirror vibrated and rang.

— Master.

"Yes, Miss Hye-Jin?" I replied.

— I can’t find Miss Chanelia Hermes.

"What?"

— As I said, I can’t find Miss Chanelia Hermes.

"Could you tell me the details?"

— I visited her room, but the room was already clean. There aren’t even traces of her going outside. I tried calling for Mr. Chang-Ryeol so he could find traces in the room, but…

"Yes?"

I immediately got a bad feeling.

"I-I understand."

— She might still be in Laves, so Miss Lian and Ye-Ri are looking for her. I’ll make sure… to contact you the moment we find her.

"A-All right. *Ah!* Please dispatch Ye-Ri to the desert. I’ll send you the exact coordinate… and…”

— Then…

"M-Miss Hye-Jin."

— Yes?

"Has Mr. Ki-Young…"

— The sub guild master?

"Actually, it's nothing."

A voice was telling me something, but I couldn't interpret it clearly in my head. It'd be nice if I were just worried for nothing, but I couldn't stop thinking about the worst-case scenario.

*'What did I say yesterday?'*

I said the burden was too heavy to carry together and that I was sorry for being a coward… I remembered saying something like that. I couldn't remember the exact words, as I only had fragments of what had happened yesterday, but I was sure I said that I was scared.

What if…

"*Ah!* Master."

"…"

"There's something I would like to say about the topic that will be discussed at the workshop today…"

"You're here, Master. You're up pretty early today, *haha*."

"Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung."

What if…

"We created a plan that will change how supplies are used during a dungeon expedition. It's still in its early stages… but I'm sure you'll be satisfied with

the plan. I would like to discuss this with you as soon as possible, so if we could meet a little earlier…"

"Master! Supplies are important during an expedition, but I have an even better idea. There are… special beings, like chimeras…"

"*Haha*, it's still so early in the morning, but all of you are already so passionate. The guild master needs a break as well, don't you guys agree?"

"We should be working night and day for the development of the continent."

"Don't you agree, Master? *Hahaha*."

"…"

"Get out," I said.

"…"

"…"

"What did you say?"

"Master, what did you—"

"I said, get out," I repeated.

"*Ah… ugh…*"

"…"

They became tense and frozen. After sending them away, I was going to head straight to Mr. Ki-Young's room, but I couldn't move at all. It took me only a few seconds to get there, but my feet wouldn't move. It was probably because I was too nervous.

I didn't want to think about it, but I couldn't stop thinking about what I said yesterday.

*‘What if… ’*

“Mr. Ki-Young… Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young…” I mumbled.

What if he had interpreted my words in a different way?

“Mr. Ki-Young… i-it’s me, Kim Hyun-Sung,” I said.

What if he had interpreted it as me saying that I was exhausted and that I was scared to carry the burden together with me? It was possible, as he wasn’t the type to expect something back whenever he gave something to someone.

“Mr. Ki-Young, can you hear me? Miss Ha-Yan… Miss Ha-Yan, are you there?” I asked.

I couldn't hear any voices outside, and I couldn't sense anyone as well.

“Mr. Ki-Young! Miss Ha-Yan!” I shouted.

The connection between us that I could always feel…

*‘It has disappeared… ’*

When?

*'When did we get disconnected? Are my eyes… Are my eyes still the same… '*

I looked into my hand mirror while being in denial of it, but I couldn't receive any messages. I tried calling him, but I couldn't hear any ringing from inside the room.

*‘It can’t be.’*

I opened the door slowly with my eyes closed.

*‘No way… ’*

“*Ahh…*”

“…”

“Damn it… damn it…” I muttered.

I saw an empty space with no warmth.

* * *

“Damn, where are we?” I[2] questioned.

“…”

“Where’s Ha-Yan? Ha-Yan! Miss Sora!” I called out.

“…”

“Ha-Yan… Miss Sora?” I called out again

“…”

“…”

“Shiiit…”

[You have entered the Beginner’s Trial tutorial.]

“Shit.”

---

1. Kim Hyun-Sung’s POV ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1081
# ROHEN CONTINENT (1)

[You have entered the Beginner's Trial tutorial.]

The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes was a thick tree.

I was in a dark space with no sunlight, but I was able to make out what was in front of me. Our tutorial looked like a dungeon, but the setting of the tutorial before me looked like a huge forest.

I immediately assessed my situation. I looked around to see if I had any items I could use to survive, but it had been a while since the tutorial started, so they had all been taken away.

To make things worse, I couldn't see anything that could be used as a proper weapon.

*'Damn it.'*

I heard beasts crying out from time to time, and I heard rustling bushes. Unlike my assumption that I would start out with Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora, I couldn't see those two anywhere I looked.

I heard someone scream from afar, and it startled me to the point of cowering.

I checked my stats, but my abilities on the continent were locked. The physical stats that I had achieved through hard work and my fleshly body, capable of performing lethal sword techniques, couldn't do any of that at all.

*'This is different from what I've been told.'*

Just like the time when I first arrived on the continent, nothing was ready at

all. I was beyond surprised and furious at the realization. This wasn't what we had agreed on.

Chanelia had promised that I would receive full support.

*'Something probably went wrong.'*

"…"

*'Since something happened, shouldn't she try to fix it?'*

A minute passed, and at this point, I ought to hear some kind of feedback, but…

[Let me tell you more about the Beginner's Trial tutorial…]

I was hearing ridiculous things, so I had to say something.

"What's going on, you jerk?"

[The tutorial of the Rohen Continent— *Huh?* W-What's going on?]

*"Can you hear me?"*

[T-The quest you must fulfill—*Huh?* Wh-What's going on? Sir! Can you come here, please? Something is off… A new member has arrived, but there's an error.]

*"Forget about calling your superior and tell me your damn name!"*

[*Uh…* what?]

*"Are you in charge of the tutorial? What's your name and position?"*

[What?]

*"Can't you hear me, damn it? I've asked you many times what your name and position were, but you can't seem to hear me.*

*"Why are you handling things like this? Didn't you hear anything from the higher-ups? Didn't you receive a report from Chanelia Hermes?*

*"The more I think about it, the more ridiculous this becomes to me. Why are you handling it this way? How did the Rohen Continent… train their administrators… damn it…"*

[*Ah*… I-I-I… I'm… sorry. I-I just joined, so… I'm not really sure…]

*"I'll say it a third time. What's your name and position?"*

[I'm Gharbia, a low-ranking a-administrator in charge of the t-tutorial… *hiccup.*]

*"Contact the higher-ups right now, find out what's going on, and report back to me. Actually, before you do that, open a communication channel and see if you received any official documents.*

*"And didn't the tutorial start a few days ago? Isn't it strange that there's a newcomer, even though it has been a few days since the tutorial started?"*

[T-The task that was assigned to me is guiding those in the tutorial… I-I was just… following the manual…]

*"Official documents."*

[I-If you wait just a moment… *Ah… ah!* I have something! I got something, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.]

*"…"*

[L-Looking at the official documents. I… think there's a problem right now…]

*"I know there's a problem, but what exactly is that problem…"*

[The higher-ups are trying to figure out what the problem is. F-First, I would like to give infinite thanks and glory to the God of Sacrifice and Revival… for

coming to Rohen to give us advice about Rohen's current state of affairs and political situation…]

*"Get to the point."*

[Yes, sir! I-It's written here that an unknown error occurred while you were entering Rohen. We proceeded with the summoning process after fulfilling all the conditions you requested… but the system… must have thought that we had interfered…]

*'Damn it… '*

[They wanted me to tell you that this isn't Rohen's fault.]

"…"

[It's an ongoing process, God of Sacrifice and Revival. Of course, the system is still—]

The low-ranking administrator was still talking, but I couldn't hear any of it.

*'I should've considered that.'*

It was my fault for not considering the possibility that the system would intervene.

Actually, it wasn't that I hadn't considered it. I was checking the system's reaction as I entered Rohen.

The system was an unbreakable law that governed the dimensions. There were basic laws, such as the higher-ups managing dimensions through faith, not allowing the demon lords to use their powers outside of their domain, and the basic elements maintaining the foundation of the continent.

Strictly speaking, the system wasn't interested in the suffering of Rohen's denizens or Rohen's imminent destruction.

The system was only interested in things that would upset the balance of the dimension or things that would go against the laws of the dimension.

Basically, the three demon lords had entered Rohen through legal means and were dealing with the penalty given to them.

*'I don't exactly know how the demon lords came to take root here, but… '*

They had to have received permission from the system using their own methods.

*'Meanwhile… '*

Everything was a first for me. They hadn't simply summoned a god of another continent to Rohen. I was summoned through the tutorial system. It was unprecedented and unusual. Living gods like Kim Hyun-Sung, Jung Ha-Yan, Cha Hee-Ra, and me were rare as well.

I thought it was fair to enter with even a bigger nerf than what was originally planned, so I came to an agreement with the administrators of Rohen before entering the continent, but…

*'It's not like an avatar was used to enter, so why do I have a ninety-nine percent nerf on my stats? I thought it would be below forty percent. Damn it, what am I supposed to do now?'*

The system had to have thought that my presence, along with Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora's presence, would harm the balance of the dimension. I had decided not to bring the entire guild with me, as I knew something like this would happen.

*'I shouldn't have brought Ha-Yan with me.'*

I was sure that she was the problem. If I had to give an example, I'd say that the immigration had decided to ask her for a second interview. The system then considered her a type of cheat key, and in order to approve her entry, it had to take many things away from her.

*‘So that’s why it split us up.’*

In addition to nerfing us, it probably thought that making us completely useless would make things balanced.

*‘We were too complacent.’*

Jung Ha-Yan was a master of magic who had achieved many things, and she was also the Goddess of Magic. She was useful and was a powerful combatant. Considering the fact that her magic had no limit, I wasn't surprised if the system thought of her as a disruptor of Rohen’s ecosystem.

The Rohen Continent was a continent with an existing magic system, so the system had to have been particularly sensitive toward Jung Ha-Yan. I had chosen Ha-Yan so that we could provide a quick way for the others to enter this continent, increase our forces, and make Woo Hyo-Yeol join us, but…

*‘Maybe I should’ have brought Deok-Gu or Hye-Jin instead.’*

[God of Sacrifice and Revival.]

*‘No, it could’ve been dangerous for Hye-Jin, as she was trying to get her foot into the door as well. Maybe I should’ve brought Yoo Ah-Young or Chang-Ryeol.’*

[God of Sacrifice and Revival?]

Bringing Han Sora was a no-brainer. There were demon lords here, so a black mage was necessary.

[G-God of Sacrifice and Revival!]

*"Yes?"*

[M-Monsters are approaching.]

I turned my head toward where the sound was coming from and saw a monster approaching on all four feet.

"*Roooooooooar!*"

"You should've told me earlier! Damn it!" I shouted.

[I-I'm sorry…]

"Shit!"

I immediately grabbed a stone beside me and threw it at the monster.

*'I can defeat them.'*

The difficulty of the tutorial dungeon was low enough for ordinary people to clear it. Even though my stats were nerfed, Average-rank monsters were easy for me to handle.

"*Roooooooooooar!*"

"Shit! Requesting support! Requesting support! Say something! Anything!" I shouted.

[*Huh?* T-The support we can provide right now… has to be something allowed by the system… the hidden piece in the tutorial dungeon… *Ah*… t-this won't work. It says in the manual that the h-hidden piece needs to be found by Adventurer—]

"Hey! Hey!" I yelled.

[H-Hold on… *Ah!* I got it! It might feel kind of rushed, but there's the holy sword…]

"Why would you give me a holy sword?!" I complained.

[*Ah!* F-For now…]

"Just do something! Please!" I begged.

I managed to push the face of the quadrupedal monster that was baring its

teeth greedily at me, but I couldn't push its claws away.

Its claws were digging into me as I was struggling to break free.

I cried a bit due to the strong pain I felt for the first time in a while, but what upset me even more was that I was getting beaten up by a low-ranking monster. If I at least had a sword, I could use my lethal sword techniques to slice the monster into pieces.

"*Ugh… Ah! Ah!* Shit! I'm dying! I'm dying! *Ugh!* I'm dying!" I shouted.

"*Krrr… Roooooooooar!*"

"Move your claws! You jerk, your claws! *Argh…"* I yelled.

[S-Sir!]

"Don't call me that!" I said.

[G-God of Sacrifice and Revival! I received permission.]

"*Ack!*"

[It has been approved!]

"Just give me anything!" I shouted.

That was when I heard a voice…

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven has shown interest in you.]

*'Huh?'*

[The Soft Hands That Touch Leather are trying to help you.]

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss wants to save you.]

[…]

[…]

[…]

I saw nicknames that read like they were made by immature teenagers. And…

[The God of Sunset…]

What?

[Is watching…]

[The God of Sunset is in despair.]

[The God of Sunset is apologizing to you.]

[The God of Sunset is crying.]

[The God of Sunset is angry.]

[The God of Sunset is crying while looking at your wounds.]

[The God of Sunset wants to destroy your enemies.]

[The God of Sunset…]

[The God of Sunset…]

[The God of Sunset…]

[…]

[…]

[…]

[…]

[The God of Sunset wants to choose you.]

[Would you like to choose the God of Sunset as your GENIUS?]

[YES / NO]

[The God of Sunset has donated 10,000 coins.]

[Would you like to choose the God of Sunset as your GENIUS?]

[YES / NO]

[The God of Sunset has donated 50,000 coins.]

[Would you like to choose the God of Sunset as your GENIUS?]

[YES / NO]

[The God of Sunset has donated 100,000 coins.]

[Would you like to choose the God of Sunset as your GENIUS?]

[YES / NO]

# CHAPTER 1082
# ROHEN CONTINENT (2)

[Would you like to choose the God of Sunset as your GENIUS?]

[YES / NO]

"*Roooooooooooar!*"

[Would you like to choose the God of Sunset as your GENIUS?]

[YES / NO]

*'Stop asking me, you jerk.'*

"*Argh!*"

[Would you like to choose the God of Sunset as your GENIUS?]

[YES / NO]

*'Is there anything around me that I can use? Is there anyone who can help me?'*

*'Shit. Damn it.'*

I had no idea what a GENIUS was, but I quickly made a decision. I still had no idea why Kim Hyun-Sung was watching me, what coins were, and why I was suddenly getting these messages.

*'Rohen's basic settings?'*

Was this a system where the gods could sponsor the players?

Were they allowed to intervene more than us?

I thought about it, but I couldn’t organize my thoughts at the moment. If I were in a safer place, I'd immediately organize the information I had gathered so far and come up with a simple plan, but the most important thing right now was defeating this monster.

“*Krr! Roooooooooar!*”

The monster crawling on the floor kept sinking its claws into me and was baring its teeth at me. I wanted to put my hand on the wound that was so painful I felt like crying, but if I were to press my wound, this monster's teeth would surely reach my neck.

At the moment, all I could do was push against the monster’s neck for as long as possible.

*‘Damn it, damn it, damn it!’*

It had been a long time since the tutorial dungeon started, so I couldn't see even a single human being at the entrance. In fact, there wasn't even an ant. My arm was getting tired, and the monster's saliva kept dripping down onto me, making it hard for me to breathe.

*‘What’s a coin? How do I open the shop?’*

Was there a way to use the coins that Kim Hyun-Sung had donated to me in the tutorial? Would that help me in taking down this monster? Where was the shop?

“*Krrr… roooooooooooar!*”

“*Ahhhhhhhh!*”

“*Krrr… roooooooooooooooooar!*”

“Yes! Yes… *argh…* Yes!” I shouted.

“*Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!*”

“Yes! Yes! *Argh!* Yes! Yeeees! Yes! Yeeeeeeees!” I yelled.

“…”

[YES]

[You have chosen the God of Sunset to be your GENIUS.]

[The God of Sunset…]

[Your…]

Messages popped up in my head, and I instantly felt a faint increase in my Strength and Agility. Afterward, the monster before me roared as I pushed it away. Actually, I didn't push it away. It retreated and covered both of its eyes, seemingly blinded by the radiant sunset that erupted from me.

“*Roooooooooooooar!*”

“You bastard!” I shouted.

*‘A weapon, a weapon!’*

I looked around, but there wasn’t anything I could use as a weapon besides the stones.

And that was when another message appeared…

[The God of Sunset has bestowed upon you the Sword of Sunset.]

*‘Nice.’*

The sword's effects were awesome. The sword’s handle was visible through the bright sunset, and I reached out slowly toward the sword. There was a *swoosh*, as I unsheathed the Sword of Sunset.

The sight of the Sword of Sunset gradually revealing itself was a spectacular sight.

When the sword finally revealed itself to the world, the monster roared again.

"*Roooooooooar!*"

"You bastard!" I cursed.

I had learned how to use a sword. I had never actually used my swordsmanship on a monster, but I could still remember Kim Hyun-Sung applauding me whenever I showed improvement in my swordsmanship. Rafael complimented me as well and said that I could use my sword techniques in a real fight.

The sword in my right hand felt heavy, but it wasn't *so* heavy that I couldn't swing it.

In addition…

*'I see it.'*

I could see its movements, and I still had access to Mind's Eye. I could see the type of monster it was, its form, its Agility and Strength stats, and its movements.

It had been a while since I held a sword, so the sensation of having a sword in hand felt foreign to me.

*'Rafael.'*

When Rafael's sword technique popped up in my head, I swung the sword in my hand.

"*Urgh.*"

I chose this sword technique because the sword was quite heavy. Unlike its appearance, Rafael's sword was really heavy. The reason it was so heavy was that the sword had to be durable enough to withstand Rafael's

overwhelming mana.

He once learned swordsmanship from Kim Hyun-Sung, but ironically, he ended up learning a technique that was different from the latter.

"*Roooooooooooar!*"

The monster started running on its two legs. Its remaining two legs made a beeline for my chest…

*'But I can block it.'*

If I used the sword's weight, I could easily block the attack.

Rafael's sword valued the power of one's core more than one's proficiency at the sword. It was impossible for me to use Rafael's sword techniques, but I could still imitate them. I just had to put strength into my back and move my legs. I gripped the sword with both hands to prevent it from bouncing off before swinging my sword.

*Clank!*

"W-What the?!" I shouted.

I was sent staggering backward instead of the monster.

*'Is this monster stronger than I thought?'*

Of course, it affected the monster as well. I assumed that was the reason it used its claws instead of its arm. It had to have felt the weight of the sword because I saw the monster rushing in without any delay.

*'I have a longer reach.'*

I was reminded of Thronus, and I was familiar with his sword technique. He made good use of his long reach, and I knew that because I once used him.

Thronus' sword technique could be the best fit for me. I used to use a spear, so I was used to using tactics that utilized weapons with a long reach. After stepping backward, I started measuring the distance between me and the monster.

My sword technique did not damage, but I immediately thrust my sword forward. An explanation was meaningless, but it was the right thing to do here.

*'The important thing is… '*

The follow-up attack after the sword thrust. To attack with my sword again, I needed to retract it quickly. There were many sword techniques in mind, but Thronus' sword was strong, even while retracting it. He…

*'Doesn't retract his sword carelessly.'*

After a thrust, he would slash before performing a downward strike. Of course, I didn't have his muscles, so there was a limit to how much I could imitate. In the end, the important thing was how fast I could retract my sword after thrusting it and how fast I could create distance between us.

After thrusting with my sword…

*'This is a fake.'*

I immediately retracted it, but that wasn't all. I stepped back as if it were all part of one move.

"*Ack!*"

My movement would have been perfect if I hadn't accidentally stumbled on some stones, but it wasn't a problem, as I had already created sufficient distance between us.

"*Roooooooooooar!*"

*'Why is the bastard so fast?'*

The monster immediately caught up to me, but I knew I wasn't in a position to use Thronus' sword technique, so I had no choice but to prepare the next technique.

*'Templar Gen.'*

The basics of the sword. Templar Gen's swordsmanship was so focused on the basics that it was the epitome of it. Perhaps I was too focused on the techniques. I felt like I was trying to learn how to run before I could even walk.

"*Haa!*" I shouted.

"*Roar!*"

The basics were important, so I had to learn how to wield a sword properly first, as I wasn't really used to wielding a sword. I was obviously uncomfortable, but I still needed to wield it because that was the right thing to do here.

The stance seemed unimportant, but my physical stats were lacking, so a proper stance was important.

"*Aaaaah!*" I yelled.

The monster's claws grazed my arm.

*'Bahamut. Bahamut.'*

My Strength was higher than the monster, as it was just a weak monster in a tutorial dungeon. Of course, its actual Strength and how much force it could exert were two different things. Even if two people had the same Strength points, how much force they could exert would vary based on their level of training.

As for Bahamut, he had mastery over a sword technique used by the military, and it allowed him to make use of his full strength. I could probably use only twenty percent of my full strength, but if I used Bahamut's sword technique, it'd be a different story.

*'I could probably use a maximum of 62.7%.'*

Bahamut had overwhelming strength that was as hot as the heat of the midsummer sun.

The essence of his sword technique was to put strength into every movement.

Ironically, the most important thing in Bahamut's swordsmanship wasn't in the arms but in the lower body that supported the whole body. He had personally corrected my swordsmanship back then.

*'Let me remember the memories of that summer. It's like I've gone back in time and was now with him. I feel like his large hands are supporting my lower body and waist. He grabbed my hands to fix my stance, and I felt like his soul has enveloped me.'*

*"An unwavering heart is what's important."*

"Yes, Templar Bahamut," I said.

*"Priest of Prophecy, think of that wooden doll as your enemy. You must put more strength into your lower body. Bring your arm this way… You're doing great."*

"Got it."

It was summer.

*"It's important not to let go of the sword. Hold it tightly to the point that it feels like the handle is going to break."*

It was clearly summer.

*"Right."*

*“Now. Your feet."*

“*AAAAAAH!*” I shouted.

“*Roooooooooooooooooooooar!*”

“*Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!*”

“*Rooooooooooar!*”

“You bastard!” I yelled.

Had Kim Hyun-Sung only taught me things I ought to avoid using? The sword technique he taught me was one he told me to use only when he was around because it was dangerous. Was I supposed to use that lethal sword technique now?

“*Ahhhhhhh!*”

“*Rooooooooooar!*”

A well-matched battle. This was a fight between a tiger and a dragon.

“*Eeeek!*”

“*Grr!*”

“*Haaaaaa!*”

“*Groooooooowl!*”

This was a competition between two proud geniuses.

It was such a fierce battle that I thought this could happen again if Hyun-

Sung and Hee-Ra noona were to fight each other.

There were no rules nor laws. It was a battle where the goal was to kill each other. Whenever I cross over a wall, the monster would cross its own wall. It felt like I was growing stronger while fighting, but at the same time, it felt like I hadn't improved at all.

*'Why is this bastard so strong? Is it because it's a hidden boss monster?'*

"*Roooooooooooooooooooar!*"

As the battle continued, the monster realized that this fight wasn't going to end soon.

*'Is this monster a hidden boss?'*

My arms and legs were shaking. The monster was getting exhausted as well. Just brushing each other was fatal to each other. In the end, we stretched out our arms and sword. Then, just like in movies, we swept past each other.

"*Haa… haa…*"

In the end, I was the last one standing.

"*Gr… owl…*"

"*Haa… haa… haa…*"

[You have completed an achievement.]

[Defeat the low-ranking monster in the tutorial dungeon. (1/1)]

"S-Shit… a low-ranking monster?"

[By accepting the God of Sunset as your GENIUS, you have obtained a job.]

[You have obtained the Novice Swordsman of Sunset.]

“Damn… it…” I mumbled.

“…”

“Damn it!!! Lethal sword technique, my ass!” I shouted.

I couldn’t help but throw the sword in my hand to the ground.

# CHAPTER 1083
# ROHEN CONTINENT (3)

*'Damn it… '*

This was bad.

*'Kim Hyun-Sung, damn it.'*

His character was completely ruined. It didn't take long for me to realize that the lethal sword techniques and my talent in swordsmanship were all a lie.

When I looked down, I saw that my clothes were completely tattered.

Not only were there holes, but blood was spilling out from the wounds on my soft skin.

Every single one of my joints was screaming in pain, and the bruise on my face proved the fierceness of the battle earlier. I was having a hard time catching my breath. I kept breathing heavily, and my hands were shaking.

*'A novice swordsman? Do they automatically give you a job the moment you select a GENIUS?'*

If I had known that, I wouldn't have chosen Kim Hyun-Sung. At first, I felt like I could succeed as a swordsman, but after fighting my heart out with the low-ranking tutorial mob, I realized that I had no talent in swordsmanship at all.

Of course, one's job and one's growth path were important, but I had always been someone never really…

*'I never really participated in battles.'*

I was a character specializing in support from the rear, so my job didn't really matter.

The problem was that the easiest way for me to protect myself had just disappeared.

If I had been given a job related to Alchemy, Summoning, Alchemist of Light, or even Alchemist itself, I would have been fine. Based on what I heard from Chanelia Hermes, production workers here were receiving decent treatment.

And what about mages? If I were to make use of my magic knowledge, I could get on track quickly and have a lot of influence. I knew that it wasn't mandatory for me to swing swords later on, but I was still upset. I had no meat shields at the moment, so this single sword was the only way I could protect myself.

*'It's no different from asking to be killed.'*

The monsters weren't the only dangerous beings.

Humans were animals who would show their worst side in the worst situation, and people summoned to another world would always have unpredictable natures.

I witnessed many scenes of people shattering their own morality just for the sake of survival. Things like sympathy and ethics would be buried under fear and anxiety, and there weren't many people capable of keeping their beliefs in a situation like that.

*'The innocent Kim Hyun-Sung had ignored the people who were stuck there, so it must've been bad.'*

Even Hyun-Sung acted that way, so there was no need for me to deduce the actions of those who had been living as beasts.

*'I need to make camp first.'*

I couldn't let myself get ambushed again.

[The God of Sunset is relieved that you're safe.]

[…]

[The God of Sunset is worried about your well-being. He says that you need to treat your wounds right now.]

[The God of Sunset is crying.]

*'Why the hell are you crying?'*

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven is saying it's impossible for you to grow stronger as a swordsman.]

*'Who the hell are you? The Gatekeeper of Heaven? Do you have a death wish?'*

[The Soft Hands that Touch Leather said they'll look for a way to help you.]

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss is looking at you worriedly.]

I could hear messages in my head, but I had no time to answer each and every one of them, as I had to create a safe zone as soon as possible.

I was in a forest.

I had never really received any formal training about reading traces, but nothing was impossible with Mind's Eye. From claw marks on trees to footsteps, things that ordinary people couldn't see appeared in my mind.

*'I'm tired.'*

If I had known this was going to happen, I would have done some physical training. If Deok-Gu were here, he would move those heavy tree branches for me. I honestly had no idea whether I was doing something wrong or not.

I had experience living on the field… but now that I thought about it, I was

sure that Deok-Gu had always been the one doing all the chores whenever we were out on the field.

*'It's getting dark.'*

There was still quite a bit of time left until the camp was done.

*'This is going really overboard… '*

I could hear the distant scream of beasts. It was the same in our tutorial dungeon, but nighttime was always more dangerous than daytime, especially in a forest like this. I looked around and saw a few low-ranking mobs far away.

I felt relieved upon confirming that there weren't any enemies nearby.

I wanted to make a campfire because it was cold, but I couldn't do that, as I was afraid that the monsters would find me. I finally made a shelter made out of leaves. It looked like it was going to collapse at any moment, but I still entered it and took out a blanket from my bag before wrapping it around myself.

I set up a few poor traps. I couldn't use my Basic Alchemy Kit, Special Potion Set, and Light Bomb Potion at the moment. I was getting hungry, so I looked at the snacks I had,

The monsters probably had a good sense of smell, but I couldn't say for sure.

[The Master of the Demon Realm is seeing the potential hidden inside you. The master is applauding you for your tenacity.]

[The Master of the Demon Realm has donated 500 coins.]

*'Bullshit.'*

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss has donated 1,000 coins.]

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss is cheering you on.]

*'How ridiculous.'*

I realized that some of the higher-ups were watching me and were sending messages to me, but no one was telling me what was going on and how they were going to compensate me. I frowned out of confusion, but I quickly found the answer after just a few moments of contemplation.

*'So they have factions here as well… '*

I was sure there were still many gods who still had no idea that I had already entered Rohen. Unlike us, where a small number of elites were managing the continent properly, the administrators of Rohen weren't united.

Those with the "GENIUS" title could donate coins, win over people with potential, and grow their influence to grow stronger together with their chosen people. If the humans under their management grew stronger or accomplished an achievement, they would definitely receive some kind of reward from it.

I was sure they all had different opinions, which was why some of the factions were against getting help from another continent.

*'It's actually really natural.'*

And it was natural for Chanelia Hermes' faction to hide the fact that I had already entered Rohen. At the moment, they were probably having a heated debate about turning Woo Hyo-Yeol into a regressor.

Considering that the low and mid-rank gods would probably not even notice his regression, I couldn't help but assume that there were many more gods interested in the regression.

The continent had to be united as one, so Chanelia couldn't divide the guardian deities. Thus, she told only a few VIPs about the fact that I had decided to enter Rohen.

Chanelia definitely forbade any sizable donations or special treatments. I had no idea how she was going to accept the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung had chosen me and was sponsoring me, but…

[The Mistress of the Holy Night has donated 1,000 coins.]

[The Mistress of the Holy Night is warning you to be careful of the God of Sunset and that choosing him as your GENIUS was a mistake.]

[The Mistress of the Holy Night is saying that the guardian deities will never help humans for no reason. She says there's probably something he wants from you and that joining hands with him is no different from selling your body and soul to him.]

*'So that's how they're interpreting this… '*

[The Master of the Demon Realm said that he has never heard of the God of Sunset either. He says he's probably a worthless, low-ranking god.]

[The Master of the Demon Realm said he hates gods like the God of Sunset. He warns that even if he isn't asking anything right now, he'll ask for many things later.]

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss tells the story of a human being who has sold their body and soul to god.]

*'I have a rough idea of what they think about the current situation.'*

While there were those busy building their careers, there were those who simply enjoyed messing with humans. In their eyes, the God of Sunset definitely looked like a thug who had a penchant for wantonly spending his holy power.

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven is insulting you by calling you a creep.]

*'You're dead, you jerk.'*

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss is comforting you.]

To make things worse, it was clear that they had never heard of the God of Sunset. Our dimension was pretty remote, but the fact that they didn't know much about the other dimensions told me just how scummy they were. I also couldn't help but think that the Rohen Continent was massive. I assumed that was the reason the three demon lords couldn't take over the continent completely despite coming here personally.

Of course, the demon lords were definitely keeping each other in check, but it was probably because Rohen was just too big.

*'Is the Rohen Continent far ahead in terms of land, the number of guardians, and the population?'*

Of course, just because it was big didn't mean that it was better than ours.

Its size could lead to many problems—actually, it already had many problems.

And that was when I heard a familiar voice…

[God of Sacrifice and Revival?]

*"…"*

It was the administrator of the tutorial.

[Th-There's actually something I would like to tell you.]

*"…"*

[God of Sacrifice and Revival?]

*"How… are you going to compensate for this?"*

[Excuse me?]

*"I don't need anything else. Just ask the person in charge about how they're going to compensate me for this. I clearly remember this being written in the contract…"*

[…]

*"Have they not told you that you can lose your hand if you cheat?"*

[It's not my place to tell you… and the higher-ups are currently looking into it, God of Sacrifice and Revival.]

*"It's different from what I heard. Of course, I expected there to be factions, but don't you find this kind of strange?"*

[That's not it, God of Sacrifice and Revival. About… the factions…]

*"…"*

[…]

*"How many factions are there?"*

[I'm a low-ranking administrator, so I don't know the exact numbers, b-but there's probably about five or six… However, many people work alone instead of in groups…]

*'It's a huge mess.'*

*"And you're on Chanelia's side?"*

[…]

A silent affirmation.

*"Hasn't it been quite some time since this all happened? The higher-ups must have organized the data. I need to hear the direct investments that Chanelia Hermes' side can make. Actually, I need to know the types of reward that I will*

*receive for this."*

*‘They thought of me as a huge pushover.’*

They probably thought I was simply going to make a sacrifice and leave. After all, I was the God of Sacrifice and Revival.

[F-First of all, Miss Chanelia Hermes said… that she had no intention of tricking you, God of Sacrifice and Revival… There is a lot of information that requires a security check, so she's going to reveal it once approved.

[She thought… there wouldn’t be problems if you entered with the Goddess of Magic… but s-she had no idea that things would turn out like this…]

*"That’s her problem. Do you really think I should care about her problems? Someone useless has just called me a creep. You’re delivering this entire conversation to the higher-ups, right? Make sure they get this if you don’t want this dimension to get destroyed…”*

[…]

*"Tell them they better behave properly."*

[F-First of all, Miss Chanelia Hermes…]

“…”

[The Soft Hands that Touch Leather has donated 100,00 coins.]

“…”

“…”

*‘It must be a bribe.’*

It wasn't enough, but she was probably trying to express her sincerity with that.

[The God of Sunset has donated 110,000 coins.]

*‘But why do you keep donating, damn it?’*

[The Soft Hands that Touch Leather has donated 150,000 coins.]

“…”

[The God of Sunset donated has 200,000 coins.]

*'This isn’t an auction, you crazy bastard.'*

[The God of Sunset is telling you not to worry.]

*'This isn’t an auction, damn it.'*

[The God of Sunset is smiling.]

“…”

“…”

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven is insulting you by calling you a soul-seller.]

# CHAPTER 1084
# ROHEN CONTINENT (4)

I received more messages, but they were mostly useless. It seemed that some of them liked the meme that the Gatekeeper of Heaven had created, as half of them insulted me by calling me a creep, and the other half cheered me on by comforting me.

It was none of their business, but the rest of them were giving me advice.

*'At least the advice is somewhat helpful.'*

Under normal circumstances, Chanelia Hermes would tell me the information herself, but it was impossible to send and receive messages directly from her at the moment.

The tutorial administrator was managing this place himself, so he could have a secret conversation with me, but he wasn't… trustworthy. It didn't seem like he had that much authority, and he seemed to be more clumsy at his task than Benigoa.

He rambled on but his words contained not even a single important information.

The things he said were, "I'll look more into it" or "I'll ask and let you know."

The negative effects of the government here were affecting him as well.

*"You contacted Woo Hyo-Yeol, right?"*

[*Ah…* yes. One moment…]

"…"

[I didn’t get a clear answer that he would help, but he said he does want to meet you, God of Sacrifice and Revival. H-He enjoys working alone. I’ll send you information about the continent for now and how you can access the shop as well!]

*"I already know that."*

[*Ah*… I see.]

Actually, most of the higher-ups were telling me to open the shop window.

[The Cluster of Stars Reflected in the Lake advises you to open the shop.]

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven is telling you to hurry and use your coins.]

[The Cluster of Stars Reflected in the Lake explains how to access the shop. Place your hand on your left wrist and say, “Shop,” and the shop will open.]

[The Soft Hands That Touch Leather says they have things they want to recommend to you.]

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss is advising you to be cautious when spending your coins.]

[The God of Sunset said securing your safety is the top priority.]

[The Mistress of the Holy Night is still worried about you. She says it'd be better if she were your GENIUS.]

*‘Looks like other gods have joined in.’*

Gods with nicknames unknown to me were talking to me, but it was fine, as spending money was always fun, regardless of one's location.

I was unsure about the exact value of these coins, but starting out with over 500,000 coins was probably a rare case, right? There was no way Chanelia Hermes or Kim Hyun-Sung would send such a small amount…

*‘I wonder if I’ll be able to purchase a Legendary item with 100,000 coins.’*

[The Cluster of Stars Reflected in the Lake is telling you to open the shop.]

*‘Just thinking about people watching me spend money is getting me excited.’*

[He Who Sits on the Golden Throne says there’s a lot you’ll need to buy. He says to open the shop quickly.]

*'But I won’t open it… '*

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven is insulting you by calling you a Coin Creep.]

*'Now, I'm really not going to open it.'*

I wrapped my blanket around me again and fixed my camp as if I couldn't hear them.

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss is wondering what you will buy.]

[The Mistress of the Holy Night is complimenting you by calling you smart.]

[The God of Sunset is shouting that your safety is the most important.]

*‘I have an idea as to what the system is like.’*

This was like an online stream. Well, it was a lot more complicated than a simple online system, but the basic structure was pretty similar. I had no idea why Rohen had chosen this kind of system, but…

*‘It’s not that bad.’*

The fact that one could choose their own hero and receive sponsorship from that hero was great. Growing stronger and working together on the continent was the biggest advantage here. I was sure there were many gods up there, so these heroes would surely be more loyal to Rohen upon finding their favorite god.

The gods weren't just administrators, so they could intervene and increase their work efficiency. This was a system that allowed minorities, individuals, and small groups to invest and grow.

It was different from our system, which focused only on management and minimizing intervention with a completely centralized system. There were many advantages, but there were many disadvantages with that system as well.

I couldn't say which one was better, but…

*'It seems like they're experiencing more disadvantages than advantages here.'*

Anyway, since I could receive coins through this method, I knew what I needed to do.

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven is saying there's a problem with your current behavior.]

*'That's true. I'm just trying to get some attention.'*

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss is expressing their concern.]

*'You don't need to worry, Abyss.'*

For this type of content, the flow of the situation was half of the content.

I had no idea how the higher-ups were watching me, but I was sure there would be rumors about me soon. They'd probably say something like, "There's a creep who received a donation of 500,000 coins, and he's going to open the shop now."

As expected, I saw more and more nicknames that I had never seen before.

Most of them were…

[The Twenty-Eighth Watcher is interested in you.]

[…is interested in you.]

[…is watching you.]

They were watching me or were showing interest in me. Also…

[…wants to know what you'll purchase at the shop.]

[Clusters of Stars Reflected in the Lake is telling you to hurry up and open the shop.]

[He Who Sits on the Golden Throne says he's been waiting a long time.]

[He Who Sits on the Golden Throne is screaming that he's losing patience.]

[The Gatekeeper of the Heavens is insulting you by calling you a Coin Creep.]

[The Twenty-Eighth Water is asking what you're doing right now.]

[The God of Sunset is telling you that you need to open the shop quickly.]

Most of them were telling me to hurry and open the shop. I had no idea why Kim Hyun-Sung was part of that group, but I imagined him being fully immersed in his hand mirror.

*'I wonder if the room is full… '*

Moreover…

[The Cluster of Stars Reflected in the Lake has donated 500 coins.]

[The Cluster of Stars Reflected in the Lake is telling you to hurry up and open the shop.]

[He Who Sits on the Golden Throne has donated 1,000 coins. He clicks his tongue and says that you seem to be greedy for coins.]

[The Gatekeeper of the Heavens is insulting you by calling you a Coin Creep.]

[The God of Sunset is getting angry at some of the rude people.]

They seemed to be thinking that I wouldn’t open the shop if I didn't get more coins, as I saw them donating coins to me. It varied from a hundred coins to one thousand coins, but everyone donated a small amount.

I wasn't done delaying things yet, but the donors were already running wild like horses without reins.

[The Gatekeeper of the Heavens is outraged by your behavior.]

[The Twenty-Eighth Watcher said that they want to show you what the wrath of the god looks like.]

I received furious and hateful messages.

“Should I open it?” I mumbled, and they went silent.

I had collected roughly six hundred thousand coins from them.

[Opening the shop. (Owned Coins: 612,300)]

[Level 1 Items]

[Level 2 Items]

[Level 3 Items]

[Level 4 Items]

[Level 5 Items]

The shop window was pretty simple, and it was designed with simplicity in mind.

It seemed that the Average, Rare, Epic, and Legendary rarities were categorized from 1 to 5 here. The shop window had yet to be updated, but it was likely that Semi-Mythic or Level 6 and Mythic or Level 7 items were

hidden.

I decided to open the Level 5 items and click on anything.

[Level 5 Items]

[Dawn's Dagger of Assassination]

[270,000 coins]

The item that caught my attention was a curved dagger. I managed to take a proper look at the item, and I also saw the details of the item. The details made me think that this was worth selling in the shop.

There was no need for me to read the description, as I wouldn't be using it anyway.

What I wanted to know was the market price.

*'It's pretty expensive.'*

Level 5—known as Legendary items to me—were around two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand coins. I pondered whether it was too expensive, but then I realized that it was priced reasonably.

There was a raging inflation on our continent, so many Legendary items were available on the market, but it wasn't like that years ago.

Those with Legendary items were guaranteed to leave a mark on the continent, regardless of whether it was a good mark or a bad mark. Of course, those items allowed them to become even stronger as well.

An example of this was Xiaolin—a former Tiger General of the Republic. Her stats were pretty low stats, but thanks to her item, she became one of the top adventurers. I was sure that not even five Legendary items were available on Rohen.

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss is recommending an item to you. They said to search for the Holy Grail of the Abyss.]

*‘They’re both sponsors and sellers… ’*

They wanted the players to do their bidding.

[The Mistress of the Holy Night is advising you to be careful. She said that there may be an item that will allow you to change your GENIUS.]

*‘Really?’*

However, I had no need for that item right now.

What I needed the most was a tool that I could use to protect myself.

“I need an Ego Sword,” I said.

An Ego Sword was a sword capable of moving on its own.

Juliena popped into my head, but I needed a sword that I could control, unlike the former.

[He Who Sits on the Golden Throne said that there are a few useful Ego Swords in the Level 5 shop.]

[The Mistress of the Holy Night is praising you for being wise.]

*'I don’t know about wise. Since I can’t swing it myself, it’s good to have one that can swing itself for me.'*

If I couldn't afford that, then a pet wouldn't be so bad. I was kind of sad that my job wasn’t Tamer, but they could be selling combat pets here.

As expected, a pet caught my eye.

[Level 5 Summoned Beasts]

[Jormungandr]

[400,000 coins]

*‘This is too expensive.’*

[A mythical beast known as the Snake of the World. During Ragnarok, Thor killed it, and it lost most of its powers. It has dozens of Level 5 poisons and Level 4 abilities.]

*‘I have to spend everything I have.'*

*'Don’t they have anthromorphs?'*

I needed loyal anthromorphs, and they had to be something similar to those anthromorphs in *isekais.* I couldn’t find them in the Level 5 shop. I looked at the Level 1 and 2 shops and saw items that were being sold for a relatively decent price.

[Level 2 Guardian]

[Vedum]

[60,000 coins]

[A bear anthromorph. It boasts a strong determination and powerful combat prowess. Its Recovery Rate increases upon consumption of honey.]

*‘It seems pretty cute from the description.’*

I was shocked by the items that they were selling in the shop, but I was sure they came sealed from outside and weren't actually part of Rohen. However, the prices were what truly stupefied me.

The ones categorized under "Summoned Beasts" were more expensive than normal items, so they weren’t cost-efficient. I had to arm them as well, so I'd probably get caught in a trap where I would need to spend all of my coins

just to make use of them.

[Level 5 Guardians.]

[Hazaku, the Elite Orc Knight]

[600,000 coins]

[A Legendary green-skinned orc and the 1st Division Captain of the Blood Dagger Clan. It is said that he became a swordsman while he was mortal. He's not loyal to others. You can lose your head after summoning him, so be careful.]

*'Why is this one so expensive?'*

I obviously skipped it, as it wasn't loyal to anyone.

[Level 5 Summoned Beasts/Guardian Draw Chest]

[250,000 coins]

[An item that allows you to summon a random Level 5 summoned beast.]

My jaw dropped when I noticed that they were offering lottery draws. I browsed the shop while having useless thoughts about how there were so many things to do here compared to the continent I was from.

I decided to purchase an Ego Sword and some useful summoned beasts. The watchers seemed excited as well, as they recommended various items to me.

Just then, my gaze landed on one side of the screen…

"What the?"

"…"

*'They had those too?'*

It wasn’t part of my plan, but my finger unconsciously moved toward it.

# CHAPTER 1085
# ROHEN CONTINENT (5)

"…"

"Ma'am," I[1] called out.

"…"

"Are there any players you've been watching over the past couple of days?" I asked.

"Why do you ask? Has no one caught your attention?"

"Yes. I've been looking hard, but I haven't seen any players that stand out. Those who caught my eye have already been picked or claimed…" I answered.

"*Hm…*"

"…"

"I don't think we have to look *only* in the tutorial dungeon. There are still many players out there that haven't picked their GENIUS, and some of them have excellent potential…"

"That's because—it's better if we get someone new. Players who have been here for years are kind of weak. Excluding a few famous players… they're kind of behind on the latest trend. If possible, it's better to have a player who can be on the mainstream," I explained.

"What was his name… *Ah!* What about Woo Hyo-Yeol?"

"…"

"…"

*'He's not just useful, ma'am.'*

I had seen Woo Hyo-Yeol before, and I was sure that he was one of the hottest rookies in his year. His combat prowess, boldness, and adaptability could be considered divine gifts, and he was a hot topic as well.

Besides the fact that some had rejected him because they couldn't get along with him, he was the perfect player. I also considered him, but…

"He has too many rivals," I said.

"I'm sure he does. But Janus."

"Yes?" I answered.

"If you really like him, shouldn't you be willing to put up with that?"

"…"

"I told you last time, didn't I? We're sponsoring them, but it's not because we're better than them. They're mere mortals, but among them, a few of them could end up coming up here… and it's not like that has never happened before. Given the nature of the Rohen Continent, we're in a mutual relationship with them."

"You're right, but—"

"If you want to become Woo Hyo-Yeol's GENIUS, you must show kindness and win him over. Be sincere and open up to him," Miss Flora advised while smiling softly.

There was a giant wreath on her head, and the blooming flowers in her long hair made her look beyond beautiful. She looked noble. She was the Goddess of Flower and Fertility, and she was the type to always maintain her composure and would say positive things to her juniors.

I wouldn’t be surprised if she was already tired of giving me advice, but her warm smile reminded me of her kindness.

*‘That’s probably why she’s creating one of the best familia in Rohen.’*

Familia—Flower and fertility.

The players who had chosen Miss Flora as their GENIUS were strong, righteous, and loyal to Miss Flora. They would always fight on the front lines whenever Rohen was in danger, and they wouldn't spare any efforts to use their powers for those who were marginalized and suffering.

That was why the Goddess of Flower and Fertility carried a lot of weight in Rohen.

I had been wanting to do something big for the continent just like her, but…

“Besides that… I think there are some suspicious things about this human named Woo Hyo-Yeol. I can only see a limited amount of information when it comes to him; many things are hidden… But maybe it’s because many people are interested in him,” I told her.

“That’s your choice, Janus. I want you to have fun with the player you've chosen and not just focus on your performance,” Flora said.

“M-Ma’am,” I stuttered.

“Don’t you think it’s best to start looking for people you can spend time with? I’m sure you saved enough coins. As long as you do a good job in investing in those players, I’m sure you'll have no issues. *Ah*~ I wonder which player will steal Janus’ heart?” Flora asked playfully.

“Miss Flora!” I shouted.

“*Hehehe*. Well, keep up the good work, Janus. You did well today, too. I’m sure you’re tired… so go and rest,” Flora said.

“Yes, ma’am! Thank you for your hard work today as well! *Ah!* Are you available tonight…” I asked.

“I’m sorry… but I have plans today…” Flora answered.

“*Ah*, I see,” I mumbled.

“Let’s watch it together next time,” Flora added.

“Okay.”

I saw Miss Flora walking away with a bright smile. I felt relieved that she had left, as I hadn't been able to use my coins and had yet to pick a GENIUS. I had been earning holy power by supplying goods to shops or through performance bonuses, but I had been feeling really frustrated because I couldn’t capitalize on my hard work.

Those close to me and my colleagues who had received an offer around the same time as me had already become someone’s guardian and were making an impact on the continent.

Not only that, some of them were already creating a famous familia, so of course, I couldn't help but think that I was really behind compared to them. Of course, starting late didn't necessarily mean that one couldn’t hop onto the bandwagon, but…

*‘I’m really running out of time.’*

I dragged my exhausted self in front of the Illusion Mirror. I wanted to see if there were any useful mortals or if there was anyone who showed potential. I was also using the Illusion Mirror to relieve some stress.

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven has entered.]

I scrolled and saw…

*‘Was her name Jung Ha-Yan?’*

Among the players who joined at the same time as her, she was a mage whose value was increasing along with Woo Hyo-Yeol's.

*'She's strong as well.'*

She had awakened as a mage as soon as she entered the tutorial dungeon. Not only did she take down the tutorial monsters with a wave of her hand, but she was growing stronger at an incomprehensible rate as well. Although she was mentally unstable, which could be considered a weakness.

However, some people thought that was actually an advantage.

Of course, I didn't consider it a flaw because genius mages were often mentally unstable. The ones who avoided her were people who wanted to create a familia. Just like Woo Hyo-Yeol, she refused to communicate with others, which would prove costly for her later down the road.

— D-Die… Die! Die!!!

— *Ahhh!*

— Run! Damn it! Run!

Just as I expected, I saw Jung Ha-Yan mercilessly casting her spells. I had no idea what was going on, as I had just arrived here, but I was sure it was nothing serious. This wasn't the first time that this happened, after all.

*'Han Sora might be better than Jung Ha-Yan.'*

There was a figure leading the players skillfully. Those who had created a group in the tutorial dungeon were really popular. They could become leaders of their familia, as they were great at communicating with those they had established a connection with.

More importantly, they would be easier to control if they shared the same mindset as their GENIUS, so she was perfect for a beginner GENIUS like me.

*'And she's actually more popular than Jung Ha-Yan.'*

— Sora unni?

— Yeah, it's okay now. Do you think… you can get up now?

— Yes… of course.

— Let's head to the shelter.

— If it weren't for you, I…

— You can thank me once we're at the shelter. You can walk, right?

— Yes, I can.

Han Sora rallied the survivors and took the lead despite the danger.

*'She's going to be really popular among the priests as well. Her physical abilities are decent, so I think she can become a holy knight… '*

I could already see the GENIUSES drooling over her, as there were many things they could offer to her. Many other players stood out, but it would be a shame to make my first contract with a Tier Two player. If possible, it would be better to make a contract with one of those three.

*'No, I shouldn't think that it's going to be that easy. I'm sure they've already been contacted by the large familias.'*

It was illegal for gods with an existing contract to make a contract with someone in the tutorial dungeon, but who could really enforce that? I felt like they had already contacted them by donating a bunch of coins…

It wasn't easy to just throw coins around, especially for someone like me who had a limited amount of funds. If I were to spend my coins recklessly and fall into the trap of another faction, I'd kiss my dream of creating a familia goodbye.

*‘My head hurts.’*

Working all night with low pay and a series of stressful events—I was exhausted both mentally and physically.

*‘I wonder what happened to the Coin Creep.’*

The player I saw two days ago popped into my head. He opened the shop after receiving coin donations from the Sunset Demon. It was extremely frustrating, but it had been a while since I enjoyed watching a show without thinking too much.

I was sure many felt a sense of satisfaction through him, considering the fact that many GENIUSES were scrounging for coins.

The player started out with 600,000 coins and looked through the Level 5 shop…

*‘In the end, he didn’t even show us what he bought.’*

He hadn't shown any heroic side, but he was extremely focused on earning coins. It wouldn't be bad to use it as a way to gain our interest in the beginning, but he’d reach his limit soon. In the end, the investors preferred investing in heroes, not jesters.

I scrolled through the mirror. Why not visit him? I was already thinking about him, after all.

“What the heck?”

[Private Player]

“Does he think… he’s important or something?”

I was wondering what he bought with his coins, but he ended up purchasing a Private Ticket. Had he really thought that people would start watching him religiously, as he had received so much attention last time?

He was a fool.

I knew what he was after, but it was such a stupid choice that I couldn't help but laugh at it.

However…

"What… is this…"

[GENIUSES Watching: 2,119]

"What the hell… is going on…" I mumbled.

The large number of viewers made my jaw drop. Not even Woo Hyo-Yeol had so many subscribers. The number of viewers was similar to the players on the main continent who had become popular after the tutorial dungeon. It had only been two days since he arrived here.

What was so great about him that he managed to gather so many guardians in just a day?

[Title: Novice Swordsman Lee Ki-Young. 3 vs. 1 Battle Against Tentacle Slimes in the Tutorial Dungeon!]

*'What… the hell… is this… '*

[Subscription Ticket is required to enter.]

[Would you like to purchase a Subscription Ticket?]

[If you agree, 200 coins will be charged.]

I wanted to watch—this was the thought that came into my mind without realizing it. I wasn't sure what was beyond this screen, but I wanted to watch. If 2,119 people—no, 2,123 people were watching, I was sure *something* was happening.

Two hundred coins. It wasn't really *that* expensive, but for me, a hundred coins were a lot of money.

*'No, I've worked hard. I've been working all night, and I even scouted players.'*

I wanted to spend a day just laughing without thinking about anything…

I contemplated for a moment. Two hundred coins were a decent gift for myself, as I worked hard today. Rather than thinking hard about it before making a decision, my hand moved on its own, and…

[List of Donators]

[1. God of Sunset♥: 930,000 Coins]

[2. Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥: 894,000 Coins]

[3. Lowest Abyss of the Abyss♥: 590,000 Coins]

[4. He Who Sits on the Golden Throne♥: 580,000 Coins]

[5. Mistress of the Holy Night♥:…]

[6. Soft Hands…]

[7…]

[8…]

I found the nicknames of the seniors whom I respected and admired in the list of leading donators on the upper right.

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ has donated 100,000 coins.]

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ is shouting, "Hang in there!"]

"What's… going on?"

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility❤ is saying, “Our Ki-Young can do it!”]

— Okay. I’ll do my best, Goddess of Flower and Fertility!

“What the hell… is going on?”

---

1. Janus’ POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1086
# ROHEN CONTINENT (6)

*‘What the hell… is going on?’*

It was chaotic, and I couldn’t describe what was happening. I also couldn't understand the viewers' excitement.

*‘What the hell are tentacle slimes?’*

It was a monster designed for the tutorial dungeon, but what was he doing with them?

Actually, who freed them?

*‘What is this… ’*

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ is shouting, 'Ki-Young is in danger!']

The battle was fierce. It was such an intense fight that I got worried, but there were no signs of them retreating. The scene that most of the GENIUSES wanted to see in that battle couldn’t be seen. He wasn’t showing off his innate combat prowess, hunting skills, and his brilliant ideas.

I was seeing a mortal struggling against the tentacle slimes.

— *Haa!*

[The God of Sunset♥ is shouting. He’s expressing his anger toward the enemies.]

His poor swings couldn’t cut through the slimes’ elastic bodies. It was a ridiculous sight.

The strength of an ordinary adult male—no… even the strength of a child could inflict damage on the slimes. I had expectations because of the holy relic that the evil Sunset Demon had given to him, but his performance was below my expectations.

Even if the item was a growth-type item that became even stronger along with the player, there was a clear difference between that item and the default tutorial items, which meant that he was supposed to be way stronger than he was at the moment.

I couldn't believe that he was having a hard time fighting those tentacle slimes with that item in hand.

*'It's an act.'*

— *Hyaaah!*

[The God of Sunset♥ is saying you're doing great! He's shouting that you can do it!]

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss♥ is anxious. They put their hands together and are praying for a miracle to happen.]

— I-I'm okay, Lowest Abyss of the Abyss!

"…"

—The tentacles… tentaaaacles… *Aargh!*

I was sure that all of this was an act. It looked nothing more than a trick to get the GENIUSES' attention. I couldn't understand why he was trying so hard to get their attention, but I was sure that the cunning bastard was up to something.

[The God of Sunset♥ is holding his head with both hands. He closes his eyes, saying that he can't watch any longer… but… he promises to be brave and watch until the end.]

But…

But… why was my heart racing?

— *Ack!*

What was so great about this? Why was it making my heart race? He looked pitiful as he desperately tried to escape the tentacle slimes that had surrounded him.

The sight made my heart stir.

*‘You can beat them, Coin Creep. You can do it! Y-You can win.’*

Just then, the Coin Creep stood up and pushed away one of the monsters.

— *Hyaaaah!*

He roared and stabbed the core of a tentacle using the sword that was glowing in an orange hue. His counterattack made me clench my hands. Of course, this wasn’t enough because the remaining two slimes stretched their tentacle toward him.

However, it seemed that he had already gotten used to their attack patterns because he promptly moved away, but he was already covered in their slimes.

He was sluggish, and his breathing was heavy. He was injured, and I could see bruises all over him. The tear stains on his face had yet to dry as well. His stamina was being eaten away, but…

“You can do it!” I shouted without realizing it. *‘What did I just do?’*

[Soft Hands that Touch Leather♥ is shouting that you can do it. She says that you should go all out.]

[Cluster of Stars Reflected in the Lake♥ is also cheering for you.]

Supporting messages poured in, and so many GENIUSES were cheering for him that I couldn't read every single message. I was also one of them.

*'So this is his goal… '*

Assuming that he had designed this brutal and dramatic victory, I felt like I had underestimated him. Was it possible to show all sorts of emotions while hunting just three tentacle slimes? Many were cheering for him, but they weren't exactly "cheering."

[He Who Sits on the Golden Throne♥ is laughing, saying that it's fun. He's satisfied, saying it's been a while since he watched a fun show.]

Some simply enjoyed the spectacle.

[The Slender Tentacle Queen♥ wants more tentacles. She said it was boring, but it was worth a watch.]

[The Slender Tentacle Queen♥ donated 5,000 coins.]

I had no idea why, but some wanted more tentacles.

[The Crooked Guardian is mocking Player Lee Ki-Young.]

[The Wolf Crying Under the Crescent Moon is pointing their finger at Lee Ki-Young while drooling.]

Some laughed and openly mocked him.

*'Jerk… He doesn't even give them hearts if they're not donation leaders.'*

His coin-first policy rendered me speechless. This place was so chaotic that it could be called an emotional trash bin. There were so many emotions in this one place.

Chaos. Was chaos his plan? Was it possible to make so many people feel many different emotions and make them focus only on him?

— *Haa… haa… urgh… yaaaaaaaaah!*

Why does it feel like he had built so much of his story when he was just fighting tentacle slimes? Had those tentacle slimes killed his parents or something?

—*Chirp! Chiiirp!*

—*Yaaaaaaaaaaah!*

How come those tentacle slimes were making *chirp chirp* noises?

[The God of Sunset♥ is shouting at you to dodge. No, he's telling you to remember what you learned last night.]

— *Hyaaaaaah!!!*

Had he been just a second late, he would have lost the encounter. With both hands holding the sword, he attacked the tentacles within striking range.

— Parry!

[The God of Sunset♥ is cheering. He shouts that he never thought you'd succeed.]

He thrust his sword toward the second slime. A tentacle slime attacked him afterward, and it made him let go of his sword, but the Coin Creep resisted. He bit the slime and made it flinch, giving him enough time to grab his sword and finish the fight.

— *Haa… haa… haa… haa…*

"…"

— *Haa… haa… haa…*

A deluge of coins poured in. Even popular players wouldn't earn so many

coins upon clearing a Level 4 dungeon.

*'How much money is he making?'*

[…has donated.]

[…has donated.]

[…has donated.]

[…has donated.]

*'This is a scam. Isn't he just putting on a show?'*

—Thank you, everyone. Th-Thank you.

*'He had no reason to fight tentacle slimes in the first place.'*

Had everyone forgotten that he could easily purchase dozens of Level 4 Guardians and Summoned Beasts with the amount of money he had in hand? He could even create a Level 2 squad. His stream said that he had purchased many devices with varying functions, but I was sure that he had earned more than he spent.

*'Coin creep.'*

Lee Ki-Young understood his character well. There had never been a person like him in the history of the Rohen Continent. There wasn't anyone who would do this in this kind of system where the GENIUSES and their players communicated and grew together.

The majority of the players couldn't adapt or were afraid of making a decision. They would either wait patiently for a guardian to come to them or obtain a quest.

Experienced players would sometimes do some pretty mischievous things, but they were so rudimentary that they couldn't be compared to what this

jerk was doing. It felt like I was watching a professional clown instead of a hero who had crossed over from another dimension.

I wasn't the only one who felt uncomfortable at the sight.

I was often advised to buy mercenaries with coins, but…

— H-How can I use this? They're precious coins that all of you have given me…

"…"

— I didn't receive these coins to spend on ridiculous things just to keep myself safe. They're coins that you earned through hard work, so how could I…

I saw him smiling brightly, and I couldn't help but think that it was a good sight.

— I'm sure I can use them for something big later. I believe that's the case. I don't have any talents, and I don't even know why I was summoned here, but I know that I can't… save the Rohen Continent.

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ is telling you to do whatever you want.]

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ has donated 5,000 coins.]

— Hey~ Goddess of Flower and Fertility~ you really don't have to send me coins~

*'What's with that voice?'*

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ is saying she's cheering for you, Ki-Young.]

— You really don't need to send me any more coins, Miss Goddess. They're

coins you earned through hard work… It'll be of no use to me. I'm satisfied just talking to all of you like this.

[The God of Sunset♥ says that you can be a little selfish.]

— I'll save these coins until I get out of the tutorial dungeon. I want to use it on something more meaningful… I can use it on your familias… or players with real talent…

[The Crooked Guardian is ridiculing you and telling you to stop putting on an act.]

[The Wolf Crying Under the Crescent Moon is telling you to speak plainly. They're ridiculing everyone, saying they're all idiots and fools who are getting swayed by a mortal.]

[The Crooked Guardian is insulting you by calling you a Coin Creep.]

[The Wolf Crying Under the Crescent Moon is warning you to stop using the tentacle slimes to earn coins and continue the tutorial. They keep insulting you by calling you a Coin Creep.]

— *Ah…*

"…"

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ is expressing her anger toward some of them by saying that they're being too harsh.]

— *Heuk… heuk…*

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss♥ is yelling and asking about the identity of those insolent figures. They're complaining about how they can say those things so carelessly while wearing the mask of anonymity. They said they'll find out their identities soon.]

— *Heuk… hiccup…*

[The Mistress of the Holy Night♥ warns that she'll definitely find out their identities.]

—E-Everyone… please… stop. Don't do thiiis…

[The Slender Tentacle Queen♥ is saying it's okay to cry, but not like this. She also promises to bring those idiots to justice.]

— I… I…

[The God of Sunset♥ says he'll offer their heads…]

— I'm… going to stop streaming. I-I'm sorry.

[…said this!]

[…said that!]

— I'm really… *heuk*… sorry. I'm sorry… for being stupid. I'm sorry for being an idiot.

[…said this!]

[…said that!]

[…said this!]

[…said that!]

[…said this!]

[…said that!]

Pandemonium broke out, and it was pure chaos.

# CHAPTER 1087
# ROHEN CONTINENT (7)

"You did… well, Master."

"I did nothing… and stop calling me master, *tsk*," I[1] said.

"…"

"Anyway, withdraw the filming crew and make camp, Mr. Bedum," I instructed.

"Yes, Director," he said.

"You did really well today. Since this is our second time filming, it's better than the first time. *Ah!* Would you like honey for your reward?" I asked.

"Ye… I mean… I'm… okay," Bedum answered.

"Do you want honey? Just imagine the honey drizzling down! The sweet and sticky honey dripping down! I bought some really delicious honey," I told him.

"I-I'm okay. More… importantly, what would you like to eat, Director?" Bedum asked.

"I don't remember what I bought. *Ah*, and about that shield, I mean, reflector, get rid of it. It's blinding me," I said.

"*Ah!* I'm sorry," Bedum said.

Bedum quickly got rid of the shield that we had been using as a reflector. I was sure he thought that he was moving fast, but in my point of view, he was moving slowly, which bothered me.

"…"

*'He's nice, but he's… kind of dumb.'*

I couldn't describe it, but his stupidity was different from Deok-Gu's.

Our pig was pretty quick-witted, but Bedum's stupidity was a different kind of stupidity.

This werebear, who liked honey, was dull. Whenever he was told to do something, he would do it well, but he was kind of slow at it. The way he talked was most annoying to me. I had spent 60,000 coins to recruit him, but…

*'No, he'll improve if I keep giving him work.'*

He wasn't that bad. After all, he was still Level 2. His potential was higher than Deok-Gu's. In addition, it was great that he could turn into a bear. He was soft, and at least he wasn't a weresloth or something.

"I'll ask… the manager of the support team. I can… take you to your camp," Bedum offered.

"Before you do that, shouldn't you take care of this mess on me? What is the art team doing?" I questioned.

"I-I'll find out. I believe they're cleaning up the stage," Bedum answered.

"They're cleaning up? Tell them to stop doing things that they weren't told to do. We might have to use it again," I told him.

"I-I'm sorry," Bedum stuttered.

"Anyway, I'm tired…" I mumbled.

"I'll take you to your camp," Bedum said.

One shop…

*'This is why people need to make money.'*

Four werebears lifted my sofa, and I felt like I was on a carriage.

The workers I had bought for cheap were finally being useful.

The first thing I saw was the werebears. Some of them were hired to be part of the lighting team, so they held up large light orbs and shields. Except for Bedum, most of them were Level 1, but I wasn't going to give them any important tasks, so I thought this was good enough. They were also enough to deal with the dungeon monsters in the tutorial dungeon.

"By the way, Mr. Bedum," I said.

"Yes?"

"About what I mentioned the other day. Was it taken care of?" I asked.

"Yes. You won't see any wererabbits near the set. The werewolves of the security team are patrolling the vicinity, but they said they haven't found anything suspicious," Bedum reported.

"What about humans?" I asked.

"They have confirmed that there's a survivor about ten kilometers away from us. The security team is keeping an eye on them, just like you asked," Bedum answered.

Just as I expected, they cleaned up the areas near the set without any issues. I looked around again and nodded at Bedum. The team members were moving busily once again. The team members would quickly lower their heads as I moved past them on my sofa.

The art team was gathering the resources that they needed using an axe or a pickaxe, and the production team discussed the story with the assistant

directors. They would then deliver the necessary documents to the manager of the art team.

The huge camp was a plus. Since they were wanderers, the camps weren't fancy, but they were pretty sturdy. I kept hearing noises from one side of the camp, and I assumed that the noises were coming from the support team.

*'This is why people need to make money.'*

After the filming, they became even more focused. I was sure they were busy because they needed to prepare the food for the day. As expected, I smelled something delicious, and the aroma alone made me drool.

*'This is what I call a tutorial dungeon. Now it feels like I've returned to my rightful place.'*

"Please make me a cup of coffee, Mr. Bedum," I requested.

"Yes, sir."

I drank a cup of coffee while sitting on a comfortable chair. The first day was difficult, but after the tasks were divided, the team members worked harder than anyone, which made me happy.

*'Of course.'*

"Mr. Bedum, do you want to go back?" I asked.

"Not… really… sir," Bedum mumbled.

No one here wanted to go back.

*'I provide them with food and warmth. They have many colleagues as well.'*

They didn't have to worry about being abused or victimized.

They were probably surprised, as they never thought that this was a job that

they could do, but they knew better than anyone that they were comfortable with their current tasks. As expected, there was a sense of loyalty in their eyes, and I guaranteed that if I told them to jump into a fiery pit, they would do that.

What was most encouraging was that some of them found joy in their work.

“I think we should eat with the leaders of each team,” I suggested.

“W-We… wouldn’t dare…”

"I don’t want to eat alone or waste time. Think of it as having a meeting while dining. Please notify them,” I ordered.

“Yes, Master,” Bedum answered.

To be honest, there wasn’t anyone who stood out among them. They were gathered here to make content, so I recruited the most cost-efficient ones, and it was better to think of it as a future investment rather than investing in the present.

*‘Mind’s Eye does come in handy.’*

The ranks of the team managers were at least Epic, and they each had one Legendary ability. From experience, one’s growth limit wasn't necessarily equivalent to one’s strength, but it was, for all intents and purposes, a safety net.

I hadn't hired them with the intention of putting them into battle, but I had bought them equipment with my coins just in case…

*‘Isn’t this too easy?’*

I really wanted to give a round of applause to the Rohen Continent for making this kind of system.

“Master. Can I come in, Master?” Bedum asked.

“Master?” he asked again.

“*Ah*, yes, come in, and I told you to stop calling me Master. You’re always doing that,” I reminded him.

“…”

“…”

“Okay, let’s start the meeting. Let’s start with the production team,” I said.

“Yes, Master. We spent exactly 13,400 coins on filming today and earned 983,500 coins. There were 985 new subscribers, and the highest number of viewers was 2,421,” they reported.

“*Hmm…*”

“We spent about 50,000 coins on supplies…” they added.

“*Ah*… what did we spend so much of our coins on?” I asked.

“I-I’m sorry, but the security team and a few team members needed basic equipment. And we also spent more than we thought on the beasts' food. I’m sorry, Master. We’ll reduce—”

“No, it’s fine. I’m not scolding you. We just need to earn more than we spend. I just wanted to know exactly what we’re spending the coins on. Anyway, good job, everyone. It’s thanks to all of you that today's filming was a success,” I told them.

“We did nothing. You planned all of this, Master…” one of them said.

“Creating amazing content cannot be done alone. The art team did well with the makeup, the lighting team held up the heavy shields nonstop, the production and audio team worked hard together to create great scenes, and the security and support team gave us their full support. I couldn’t have done this by myself,” I said.

“But…”

“I know you’re all still lacking. It must’ve been shocking to be called here out of nowhere, and I'm sure you're stressed about doing work that you’ve never done before. I’m also sure that some of you still don’t know what your role is or what you’re supposed to do,” I continued.

“W-We don't know what to say…” they replied.

“It’s fine. You just need to learn little by little,” I reassured them.

“…”

“I think all of you can move on to the next part with me as long as you show satisfactory results,” I told them.

“…”

“…”

The atmosphere suddenly became heavy.

“Today is a good day, so let’s talk about this another time. Now, let’s discuss what we’re going to film next,” I suggested.

“…”

“Feel free to talk while eating. You don’t need to be afraid of making mistakes, and you won’t get penalized for anything, so feel free to have a discussion. I’m giving you this opportunity because I want all of you to get used to this as soon as possible,” I said.

“…”

“If I have to keep doing this, then there’s no point in having this team. You have to express your opinions without me initiating the conversation. I need to know your opinions so you can just say whatever is on your mind,” I

added.

*‘I won't know what I’m going to be doing if they don’t know anything.’*

They remained silent and simply looked around the room. Actually, I knew this was going to happen. The werewolves in the security team seemed like they had no idea what they were doing. They probably were confused as to why we were creating content, but it wasn't like I was expecting them to know.

*‘It’s not like all of them aren’t aware.’*

Some of them worked as playwrights or theater directors, while others knew exactly how this system worked. Besides the bear who liked honey, I couldn’t remember each and every member, but in meetings like this, some of them were bound to stand out.

Just then, a child stopped looking around the room and suggested, “How about… we do it a few more times?”

“…”

“I’m talking about the tentacle slimes. I don’t really know what a coin is… but spending about ten thousand coins to earn one million coins is rare, even for gold coins.

"No merchant would turn down such a profitable business. In just three hours… In just three hours, you earned nine hundred thousand coins.

"That doesn't sound believable at all. I can’t believe you made so much… with just three… tentacle slimes. The tentacles… made you nine hundred thousand coins… I-I can’t believe… tentacle slimes… could be so… profitable,” he continued.

*‘Ah, he’s a halfling merchant. I put him in the production team because he seemed pretty smart.’*

“I agree… with that as well, but the Master’s body…” another chimed in.

“Th-That’s true… I’m worried about his well-being as well, but he told us to think of a way where we could gain the most profit…” the child said.

“I’m against it.”

The one who opposed the halfling merchant’s suggestion was a human mage who was in charge of the production and special effects. I remembered their resume mentioning that they once worked as a playwright.

“The tentacle slimes were satisfactory,” the mage said.

*'Satisfactory? What do you mean?'*

“It was a notable achievement, and the tentacle slimes were great for earning a lot of coins, but we can’t keep using the tentacle slimes. I don’t want our master’s stream to only be about them.

"Basically, we need something less stimulating; we need something that will build his story. Right now, this is like a typical story of an adventurer meeting comrades and growing together with them, but we need something filled with both sadness and happiness.

"We need content that can elevate him from B-rank to A-rank,” they explained.

“…”

“If we use the tentacle slimes again, the master will forever be in their shadows,” the mage added.

“You have a point, but he needs to build his body a little more! We have to keep pushing for it to keep the subscribers and make them stay! Do you really think that the tentacle slimes were stimulating?

"You may think they’ll become boring someday, but you’re making a huge

mistake. They're the weakest! The next strongest are the Tentacle-morphing Goblins! And the next strongest are the Tentacle-Morphing Orcs! There's no end to this content!" the halfling argued.

"And after that? Are you going to keep making content with tentacles? I can guarantee that our sales will decline by then. And what about the cost of the Tentacle Orcs? How are you going to handle the power creep?

"You're making a mistake if you think we can make a profit equal to the amount of money we invest. If that doesn't work, are you going to make the Great Tentacle King spawn? How much coin are you going to spend on that?" the mage questioned.

"We have many monsters that we can use. It doesn't have to be the slimes! Is there a reason why we shouldn't use these good materials when they're already well-received in the market?

"I'm sure rumors are already spreading. The fierce battle our master had with the tentacles must be making the higher-ups feel excited. I'm sure the next batch of potential subscribers are waiting for the same thing! They're all waiting for the Tentacle Orcs! Are you going to betray the subscribers?" the halfling questioned.

"That's exactly why we need to stop using them! We can use them again later, but now is not the time! Turning potential subscribers into true subscribers by using tentacles is just—"

*Bam!*

"Are you saying that they're not true subscribers?! How absurd!" the halfling roared, interrupting the mage.

*'Why is it getting so intense?'*

I was dumbfounded when they started arguing over tentacles. There was madness in the halfling's eyes as he glared at the human mage. In the end, those two took the discussion seriously, and I couldn't help but start thinking

about the tentacles.

I was shocked by how much they were crying about the tentacles.

*'What the hell… '*

"Tentacles!"

"No! Tentacles aren't the answer!"

"Tentacle Orcs!"

"No!"

"Next will be Tentacle Ogres!"

*'Tentacle Ogres? What the hell are those? How am I supposed to fight that?'*

Just then, I heard a familiar voice.

[I-I apologize for the interruption, God of Sacrifice and Revival. I think he'll visit you today.]

"…"

Who?

[I'm talking about Woo Hyo-Yeol! He said he wants to meet you!]

"…"

Really?

[It was hard, but I managed to convince him, God of Sacrifice and Revival! *Haha!*]

"…"

"..."

*'It's been a while since you pulled something off.'*

---

1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

# CHAPTER 1088
# ROHEN CONTINENT (8)

*‘He’s excited because he did something good for once.’*

[Yes, I did it, God of Sacrifice and Revival!]

Gharbia was obviously excited. He sounded like a salesman who had made his first-ever sale.

*‘He’s a little bit too excited. Is this really that exciting?’*

[*Haha!* My seniors said I could never do it, but who am I? He ignored me at first, but when I spoke strongly about it, Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol eventually started talking to me. Yes, I did it. It was all me.]

*"…"*

[The fact that you’re the God of Sacrifice and Revival is a secret from the mortals, so I couldn’t tell him. If I had told him, the conversation would have been a lot easier. But it doesn’t matter. *Haha*. We told Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol that we found someone who could help him.]

*'But why are you calling him Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol?'*

[After talking about this and that… he finally agreed. He said he would visit you today and asked for your coordinates, so I sent him your coordinates.]

He had just sent the coordinates, so could he really call that a success?

What if he was interested in something else?

*‘I won’t recruit you even if you do that.’*

*"There are some parts that you omitted…"*

[*Huh*?]

*"You omitted some parts, such as how you convinced him and how the conversation went."*

[*Ah*, yes. It's a bit of a long story to tell you the process of how I convinced him, but I told him that you would provide him with a lot of support…]

*"Well, that's…"*

[I told him that he'll need you and that it'll be beneficial for him to meet you… and that you were waiting for him…]

*"You didn't record your conversation with him?"*

[I didn't… I'm sorry.]

"…"

*'Damn it. That's a shame.'*

I had no idea what tone or wording he had used to convince him, so I was worried.

What if this tutorial dummy acted too humbly and cowardly? He had been referring to him as Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol, and he had omitted many things in the middle.

Perhaps he omitted those details to hide them from me.

[D-Did I make a mistake…]

*"Were you acting in a cowardly—"*

[No! I didn't act cowardly!]

Gharbia quickly denied it, but I saw him holding the hem of his pants like a coward.

*‘So he really did beg like a coward. He’s an administrator, for crying out loud… ’*

[I hadn't acted like a coward. Of course, I might’ve shown hints of that while trying to convince him, but for the sake of achieving this result… I’m not embarrassed about my actions.]

“…”

[The important thing is making sure that you and Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol will meet.]

No, how you made this meeting happen was the most important part rather than the meeting itself. Of course, I wanted to applaud him for making this meeting happen, but…

*‘I don’t want him to think I’m too humble… ’*

It was better for me to play hard to get. It seemed trivial, but this meeting would determine who would have more power in our relationship. If I showed that I desperately wanted Woo Hyo-Yeol, then the blond and tanned thug would have the upper hand.

*‘I can’t let him look down on me.’*

There was a certain universal fact that described people like him.

*‘They're weak toward the strong but strong toward the weak.’*

If he believed that there was no one stronger than him, then he wouldn't compromise even for the smallest thing.

[I-I’m sorry, God of Sacrifice and Revival.]

*"It’s fine. I won’t scold you too much since you convinced him to meet me."*

*‘And it’ll just be annoying to keep scolding him… ’*

He wasn't the type to learn anything, even if I ended up teaching him.

[However, I think it’s best if we send him an official invitation.]

[*Ah*… right! I see.]

*"Please send me Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol’s coordinates. I think setting the exact date and time will be better for both of us. I want to send one of my people to deliver the invitation to him.*

*"There might be a misunderstanding, so notify him that one of my people will be visiting him."*

[Yes, sir!]

I wanted him to know that I wasn’t someone he could come and meet anytime and that I was a busy and prideful intellectual.

“Excuse me… Master?” Bedum said.

[Th-Then, when should I tell him that we’ll be heading there?]

*"*I need to know his exact coordinates… to let him know of the time.*"*

[*Ah*, I’m sorry. I’ll send them to you now.]

“Master.”

“Master, are you okay?”

I nodded after receiving the coordinates. I turned to the managers staring at me. The debate over tentacles was coming to an end. They seemed worried that they made me uncomfortable, but they seemed pretty relieved when I started talking.

“We’ll need to reschedule our meeting. Something important came up.”

“What? Are you going straight into filming?” one of them asked.

“No, there’s someone I need to meet, and I need all of your help. Regarding today’s meeting, I want you to send me a report after you're finished with your discussion…” I instructed.

“Yes, sir!”

“I want the manager of the security team to head to the coordinates that I’m going to tell you now and deliver a letter to a blond-haired man. It’ll be a short letter, so please wait for me,” I added.

After buying some stationery with the coins, I wrote a letter that showed off my intelligence. The letter contained information about when and where we would meet. It was written in the handwriting of a Sacred Democratic Country elite noble.

It clearly looked like an official invitation. When I closed it with a seal, the werewolf that was looking at me seemed determined. They looked like they were saying that they were going to put their life on the line to complete this mission.

“I will fulfill my mission no matter what, *grr,*” the werewolf said.

“It’s a simple mission. I would like for you to take three werewolves with you. They’re expecting you as well, so approach them as kindly as possible and deliver my letter,” I instructed.

“Yes, sir.”

“The art team…”

The stage and atmosphere were important.

“Is a fallen temple concept possible? It doesn’t have to be that big, just a few

pillars and statues. I just need one table and two chairs inside the temple," I said.

"Yes, we can do that, Master."

"I would like the makeup team to be on standby. After I'm done washing up—"

"We'll think hard about your outfit," they interrupted me.

*'I'll wash myself squeaky clean.'*

The first impression was important. People would go out wearing their best outfit and looking their best on a simple blind date. However, the meeting of two heroes trying to save the continent…

*'Is more important… '*

I thought about acting weak or perhaps acting like a talented commander. What about acting like a saint in the Democratic Country? If I were weak, I'd look like an idiot, and if I were nice, he'd think of me as a pushover.

The best option here was to show him that I was smart.

After washing up in my camp, I picked out an appropriate outfit. It would be easier if Ji-Hye noona were with me, but the members of the art team had good eyes as well.

"As simple as possible, right, Master?"

"Yes, " I answered.

"You'll look good in this as well…"

"And… this one as well. For your accessory…"

"I think it'll be fine if I wear a lot of accessories. I'll leave them out, so why

don’t you choose?” they suggested.

*‘That thug had piercings all over him. His ears alone had several piercings.’*

Having something in common would make it easier for me to win him over. I wasn't a fan of wearing anything that was *too* fancy, but I had a feeling that I needed to wear at least two or three accessories. I wore bracelets, wings, and a pair of simple earrings.

“C-Can I really pierce your ears?”

“Hold on. Let me drink the anesthetic potion,” I said.

“One… two…”

“*Ack!*”

“I… haven’t pierced them yet, Master.”

When I looked in the mirror, I saw that I looked pretty convincing. I seemed reasonably capable. I wore a white dress shirt and a pair of clean black pants. I sported the *Monami*[1]look, which was trending at one point.

I thought I looked too modern, so I wore a belt popular in this world.

I carried a few daggers as my accessory. They looked nothing special, but it was special *here*. Looking this clean in a tutorial dungeon where I was supposed to look like a mess was enough proof of my capabilities.

Using werewolves as messengers would make him realize that I wasn’t an ordinary person, but it’d be different once he saw me in person. The art team moved busily to construct our meeting place.

“You just need to wait a little longer, Master,” they said.

“It’s really detailed,” I commented.

“I was wondering where to shine the light to make it look impactful.”

“When Mr. Hyo-Yeol comes in, make the light shine down on me a bit. Also, this place looks a bit too clean. Can you make it look a little more vintage? Have broken things here and there to make this place look old.

"You know what I’m talking about, right?” I asked.

“Yes, I’ll get started on it right away, Master,” the manager answered.

“And the tea… Actually, he probably doesn’t drink tea or coffee…” I mumbled.

“Would you like me to prepare some wine?” they asked.

“No, not wine… I think something like… rum will be good. But maybe it won’t look very classy,” I suggested.

“…”

“You can just serve us tea,” I instructed.

“We’ll prepare Gesheart tea,” they said.

“I don’t know what that is, but—”

“The nobles with a penchant for drinking tea often drink it. It's not usually used in that way, but—”

“That sounds great,” I interrupted them.

“I’ll prepare it right away.”

“We’ll need snacks as well,” I added.

“Yes, sir.”

The plan was perfect, causing me to nod.

The sight of me sitting in the ruined temple bathed in the light pouring down from the ceiling made me look mysterious both objectively and subjectively.

The most important thing to do whenever two people were meeting for the first time was to make the other person become curious. He was a thug, but he'd surely be curious about me because of the light shining down on me.

The fact that I managed to make this kind of atmosphere in the tutorial dungeon was just…

*'You're amazing, Lee Ki-Young.'*

I clearly looked like a competent saint.

*'First of all, let's take a seat.'*

*'What should we talk about first?'*

I had been waiting for him for about eleven minutes now. Although I was annoyed that it was already past our scheduled meeting time, I understood his feelings.

*'He's a little late… Yeah, I get it. He doesn't seem like the type to be punctual. It's pretty obvious.'*

I waited for him for about an hour.

"It's only an hour…"

It was a ridiculous thought because one hour quickly became two hours.

"…"

"…"

Thirty minutes later, I finally realized it.

"That scum," I mumbled.

He stood me up.

*Bam!*

“You damn scum!” I shouted.

---

1. Name of a stationery company in Korea. ☜

# CHAPTER 1089
# ROHEN CONTINENT (9)

“You damn thug! You bastard!” I shouted.

“M-Master…”

“You disgusting scum!” I yelled.

“Master! P-Please calm down.”

“Don’t tell me to calm down! How dare he mess this up for me. I even pierced my ears. Damn it! How dare he!” I continued.

“Master, p-please calm down. U-Use the tentacles… to calm—”

“What do you mean use the tentacles? They won’t help me calm down, damn it!” I interrupted.

I couldn't break the table or the chairs, so I grabbed the teacup on the table and threw it to the ground. However, I heard a dull sound instead of a clatter. I was getting a bit angry. I pulled out the Sword of Sunset and swung it at the statue, but I couldn't hear anything other than a dull noise. I even felt like my palms were being torn apart.

*‘I want to break something, damn it. Only by doing can I relieve my stress.’*

I couldn't see anything that I could break, so I eventually grabbed the cookie on the plate and threw it on the ground before stomping on it. I felt kind of better when I saw the crushed cookie, but…

[I-I’m sorry, God of Sacrifice and Revival. I-I…]

I got angry again when I heard Gharbia's voice.

"…"

[I think… there was some sort of mistake.]

*"A mistake? Will that make everything okay? You think saying that will make me feel better?"*

[I'm sorry. I have nothing more to say.]

*"I waited over two and a half hours for that jerk. What were you doing instead of bringing him to me?"*

[W-We couldn't contact him either. He must've purchased a privacy screen at the coin shop… but I clearly heard him say that he was coming…]

"Security! I want the manager here right now," I said.

"Y-Yes, sir?"

"Are you sure you delivered the letter to him?" I asked.

"Yes. I delivered the letter to a strange human with tanned skin and blond hair. I can still remember the tattoo on his shoulder," the manager answered.

"And you saw him read the letter?" I asked.

"Yes. I heard him say that he'll visit you at the time written in the letter. He looked at me with a bit of curiosity and waved his hand. It seemed like he was telling me to leave, so I said goodbye and returned… That's all."

"And he still ignored it?" I mumbled.

"…"

"He received the letter, and we even got his answer, but he decided not to come, anyway?" I questioned.

*'Is he crazy?'*

Was he insane?

“I’m sorry.”

*‘What was that bastard doing?’*

[God of Sacrifice and Revival!]

"What? What? What is it now, damn it!"

[It’s Woo Hyo-Yeol. I managed to get a hold of him!]

*"Really? What did he say? He’s coming now? Tell him that it’s already late… and that it’s no use."*

[…]

*"What? What did he say?"*

[H-He said he fell asleep.]

*"…"*

[…]

[And that…]

[He changed… his mind… and doesn’t want to go anymore…]

*"…"*

[H-He said it’s bothersome…]

“…”

[What… should we do, God of Sacrifice and Revival?]

*"Why the hell are you asking me that?"*

[If I could, I would tear all of his limbs off right now, but…]

"…"

[The sad thing is that I can't do that. How… how could he make the symbol of sacrifice and revival wait?!]

*'It's really annoying to see him change his attitude in the blink of an eye.'*

He started calling Hyo-Yeol a jerk instead of Mr. Hyo-Yeol.

I was sure he was frustrated as well.

I was the one who sent the invitation, but the incompetent administrator started all of this himself. It had only been a few hours since he showed off to me in an effort to earn my compliment, but the situation turned for the worse, so I couldn't imagine how nervous he was right now.

If I had to make a comparison, it was like the new hire had scheduled a meeting with the CEO of another business, but the meeting was canceled for some ridiculous reason.

It wasn't his fault, but I was sure he felt like it was his fault.

Moreover, it wasn't like he made no mistakes as well.

[I'll make sure he pays for this, God of Sacrifice and Revival.]

*'And how are you going to do that? Shouldn't you take responsibility before doing that?'*

The ones supporting Hyo-Yeol weren't Gharbia but the people in his faction. To be honest, I wouldn't be surprised if the higher-ups considered Woo Hyo-Yeol to be more important than some lowly tutorial administrator. I was sure he'd never be able to pressure Woo Hyo-Yeol, even if the world ended up crashing down.

I couldn't understand why this faction had chosen him as their regressor, but all I could think about was that they had made a mistake. This jerk was just…

*'A bastard who does whatever he wants.'*

He wasn't a social misfit but someone who simply didn't want to adapt to society.

He hadn't failed to adapt to society like our good-looking and nice Hyun-Sung due to some unforeseen circumstances. He was refusing to fit in with society. He had no intention of keeping promises, and he only made selfish decisions.

Even if we were to come to an agreement, there'd be no guarantee that he'd keep his promise. I was sure that he either thought that it wouldn't be a bad idea to meet me, got annoyed at the administrator, or suddenly wanted to meet someone new.

I was sure that either of those was the reason he decided to see me once, but…

*'He stood me up not because he had no choice but to do so.'*

He was suddenly sleepy, so he decided not to come. He was the type of person that Hye-Jin noona, Commander Jin, and I despised the most.

Actually, Commander Jin would hate him more than me. He wouldn't just complain and insult him in front of me; it was highly likely that he wouldn't even acknowledge Woo Hyo-Yeol's presence. He was someone who deserved to be eliminated and left behind.

*'Guys like him are the most annoying to handle.'*

The reason he had yet to be eliminated and left behind was that he was a genius.

*'Hee-Ra noona trained as well.'*

She had told me that she wasn't the type to train, but I was sure she had done tons of research to see how much stronger she could get. There was no need for me to mention her outlook toward life. From afar, it seemed like she was always drinking, but up close, one could see that she was simply restraining herself.

Regardless of hangovers or whatever issues, she'd always stick to her schedule, and she wasn't ashamed of respecting those weaker than her. She was the type of person who had no need to fit in with society, but she worked harder than anyone else to adapt to society.

Now that I thought about it, she had a pretty big heart as well.

"*Wheew…* damn it…" I mumbled.

Jerks who trusted only in their skills without knowing their place were bound to meet their end.

"*Whoo…*"

"What would you like to do, Master? How about we drag him—"

"No, there's no need for that," I interrupted him.

*'He might make a huge deal and say that I'm picking a fight with him.'*

"…"

*'It's your loss, not mine.'*

His only strengths were his natural talent and the fact that he was a regressor.

I wasn't even sure if he could make full use of that fact. I wasn't sure if he could even remember each and every incident on the previous timeline and if he could even make an impact on this timeline.

I was sure the only incidents he remembered were incidents centered around him.

Unfortunately for him, the smallest change would change everything.

*‘Because I’m here.’*

The future was already changing because of my presence.

I was monopolizing the coins that were supposed to be spread out throughout the entire continent, and the higher-ups who were supposed to be GENIUSES of other people were supporting me.

Those who wanted to become stronger couldn't receive an opportunity to do so because of me, and they wouldn't even be able to create a familia due to the reduced funds.

The biggest change in this round was that a sunset familia had appeared from out of nowhere.

*‘It’s better if I train some of them. I can choose someone among the players… or… ’*

*'Make them come to me. If they’re not curious about me, I’ll make them curious.'*

*"Hey…”*

[…]

*"Hey, admin. Did you say this place has a report card system here?"*

[That’s right, God of Sacrifice and Revival. When it comes to incidents considered mainstream, such as those similar to the tutorial dungeon, we divide the players into those who are active and those who are not, regardless of their contribution level. We line up the top ten players and reward them with coins for their performance.]

*"That's nice."*

[…]

*"What's the current progress of the Beginner's Trial?"*

[I can't tell—]

*"*What's the progress?*"*

[It's about half-complete, but there's still the hidden quest, God of Sacrifice and Revival. A-as I mentioned, the location of the hidden quest is not something that I can divulge—]

"No, that's enough," I interrupted him.

"…"

The dungeon's design was grand, but I was sure the administrator of this tutorial wasn't better than me when it came to designing dungeons.

*'I have workers as well.'*

I could use them while creating content and…

[The tutorial dungeon, Beginner's Trial, is complete. We pay our respects to all surviving players. We will now proceed with the entry process into the Rohen Continent.]

[Mainstream Beginner's Trial Raid Ranking.]

[1. Lee Ki-Young: 2,524,551 Points]

[2. Han Sora: 1,131,117 Points]

[3. Woo Hyo-Yeol: 1,016,133 Points]

[…]

[…]

[9. Jung Ha-Yan…]

[We'll be giving out coins and items to the top players of the Beginner's Trial raid.]

I saw Hyo-Yeol's pitiful report card. His report card was so pitiful that even Han Sora managed to beat him.

"*Pfft!*"

"…"

"*Pfft! Hehehe!*"

* * *

"Lee Ki-Young? Han Sora? Who are these guys?"

* * *

"*Hahahahaha!*"

* * *

"Lee Ki-Young… who the hell is this guy? How… how did he…"

* * *

"*Hahahahahahahahaha!*"

# CHAPTER 1090
# ROHEN CONTINENT (10)

[The God of Sunset♥ has donated 10,000 coins.]

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ has donated 8,000 coins.]

[The Mistress of the Holy Night♥ has donated 10,000 coins.]

[He Who Sits on the Golden Throne♥ has donated 20,000 coins.]

[…has donated coins.]

[…has donated coins.]

After laughing out loud, I started streaming once again, and I saw a deluge of countless coins. I had been working without taking a break, and when my efforts finally paid off in spades, I was struck by an excitement so sublime I couldn't quite describe it.

*'I think that's the reason they implemented this kind of system.'*

It felt like I was receiving compliments for my hard work.

It was fulfilling, and it felt like I actually did something.

The rewards were just a bonus. Many people were watching me, so these emotions were multiplied. I briefly wondered whether I felt this way because I lacked the recognition of my parents when I was young, but I felt like anyone would feel the same way if they were in my situation.

*'This is why you want to be first place.'*

The level of satisfaction from achieving something varied from person to

person, but I was sure the other top-ranking players felt the same way. Those outside of the ranks would become determined to try harder next time upon seeing those at the top of the ranks.

This was a way to inspire those people.

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ says that you were really amazing. She's amazed because no one has cleared so many hidden quests in the Beginner's Trial. She's complimenting you for overcoming so many dangers using your wit and tactics rather than force.]

[The God of Sunset♥ is worried about you. It was an amazing adventure, but he emphasizes that it was dangerous. He's wondering if you're hurt anywhere or tired.]

[The Cluster of Stars Reflected in the Lake♥ expresses their pure admiration. They're wondering how you were able to survive the hidden quest, "The Hunter's Chase."]

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven♥ said they want to send blessings to the lovely Ki-Young. They're shouting that "The Hunter's Chase" wasn't the only hidden quest. They're crying out and saying that the hidden quests you cleared were amazing. They're not sure why they're crying, but they can't help but cry.]

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven♥ has donated 10,000 coins.]

*'That's what I'm talking about.'*

[The Crooked Guardian is saying that you got lucky. They're insulting you, saying that you certainly would have died if you had made even the slightest mistake.]

[The Wolf Crying Under the Crescent Moon says that something is strange. They're raising suspicion, saying that the hidden bosses were defeated with impossible times.]

*‘There are haters everywhere.’*

[The God of Sunset♥… said.]

[…said that.]

[…said that.]

“Thank you, Gatekeeper of Heaven! And thank you as well, Goddess… Thank you, everyone. I sincerely thank everyone who’s cheering for me, giving me advice, and those who are here,” I said.

[The Glass Window Hidden in the Shadows says you won’t make it on the mainstream. They’re sure that you won’t grow into a swordsman.]

“Yes, I must’ve been lucky this time. I almost died,” I said.

“…”

“When I was doing the Hunter’s Chase… I was really scared. If you guys hadn't been with me, I would have given up long ago. I also ran into some tentacle goblins out of nowhere…” I added.

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ admires your humility and has donated 5,000 coins.]

“Hey… Goddess of Fertility~ you really don’t have to donate coins,” I told her.

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ says that you deserve it.]

“I managed to get first place this time, so I received a huge prize… *hehe*,” I said.

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven♥ is admiring your smile and laughter.]

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ is curious about your future plans. She’s asking if you’re thinking about joining a familia.]

[The Slender Tentacle Queen♥ is nodding as well. She advises that it's not a bad idea to join a familia for now instead of creating one since you don't have enough members yet.]

"I think it's still too early for me to tell you about my plans regarding the familia. I also want to ask my GENIUS, the God of Sunset, for his opinion about how to be on the mainstream moving forward as well as the direction I should take…" I informed them.

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ says she can guide you. She says she can help the God of Sunset as well.]

*'She's looking down on Hyun-Sung.'*

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't the type to be treated like some low-ranking god, but he was being treated like some lowly god. Of course, the Goddess of Flower and Fertility had no ill intent behind her words, but the others saw Kim Hyun-Sung the same way.

Looking at the overall situation, the named ones seemed to know each other, and many of them weren't even trying to hide their identities. The ones below them were considered to be tools of a faction and nothing more than low-ranking gods.

*'I'm sure they look like fools because they're giving away all their savings—the savings they spent hundreds and thousands of years to build—to a mere human.'*

The God of Sunset probably looked like that as well. Basically, he was a pushover in their eyes.

As expected, the Goddess of Flower and Fertility's words made the others pressure me into joining their familia. They were clearly looking down on the evil god of sunset, but Kim Hyun-Sung seemed like he couldn't understand the issue.

[The God of Sunset♥ is asking if any of them are offering good benefits. If there's a familia where his safety would be secured… he'd like to hear from them.]

*'That's all he's doing.'*

"But this is still too sudden… and a bit embarrassing. Rather than hearing it from all of you… I think it's best to hear more from those who live together…" I suggested.

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ says that she was being foolish. The lives of the mortals belong to the mortals. It is the rule.]

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ says that it's not good to intervene too much, and she has decided to leave it all up to you.]

"Thank you for believing in me, and I'm… sorry… but I'm going to put up a privacy screen. Please wait until I turn on my stream tomorrow~" I said.

[…says this.]

[…says that.]

As soon as the privacy screen was active…

"*Hahahahahahahaha*!" I laughed.

"Congratulations, Master."

"Congratulations."

"Congratulations! Master!"

"It's all thanks to your hard work. I did nothing," I said.

"W-When you said you were going to clear this entire place… I-I couldn't believe it, and but I really… had no idea that things would turn out this way…"

“I also didn't think that things would turn out this way either,” I said.

Actually, I knew that it was going to work out.

*‘Because the map was big… ’*

Unlike our simplified tutorial dungeon, the Beginner’s Trial was part of the mainstream, so it was huge and impactful.

*‘One person can't clear it alone… ’*

Destroying the eight crystal towers located throughout this huge forest was the objective of the Beginner’s Trial that the Rohen Continent had prepared for the players. Besides that, there were many hidden pieces and quests along with hidden monsters.

The administrator had provided information on how to look at the bigger picture, but everything else depended on the player.

The design of the dungeon was so friendly that even killing tutorial mobs was considered an achievement, so there were many ways to earn points.

I ran in the opposite direction of Woo Hyo-Yeol and destroyed the crystal towers that were still standing. Then, I grabbed all the hidden quests that had yet to be discovered. I had no idea how many hidden pieces he remembered, but I was sure he hadn't memorized the details for each and every hidden piece.

He probably had ideas about some of them, but I was sure the details remained vague.

Putting my name at the top was easier than fighting tentacle slimes, but it wasn’t really something to be happy about.

*‘I had no idea Sora would get second place.’*

I felt like Ha-Yan managed to get a lot of points because she just broke

everything and got lucky, but Han Sora was pretty smart.

If she had stumbled upon great comrades and created a nice party, it wasn't a surprise that she made it to the ranks. She was very cautious and attentive. I wasn't sure if it was because of Jung Ha-Yan, but she was thorough even in the most trivial incidents.

She was cautious and would try to draw a conclusion upon observing even the smallest traces of mana.

She was undervalued because she was always with the God of Magic, but she was the highest authority when it came to black magic. I was reminded of the time when she was working as my secretary, and I couldn't help but think that she used what she had learned from me to thrive in this dungeon.

I felt like Han Sora was enough to make Woo Hyo-Yeol angry.

"I didn't even need to show him my sincerity. *Ha… hahaha*," I laughed.

"…"

"*Pfft… haha.*"

"Master."

"*Hahahaha*. His head is empty, so he couldn't even get second place despite having the regressor buff," I added.

"…"

"What's the point of a regressor with no memories of the past? Of course, he had no idea what had happened in the tutorial dungeon, and I was sure he had no idea what items were in here."

"Even Hyun-Sung couldn't remember everything, so there's no way he can do something like that." I paused.

"…"

"He probably never thought about why this dungeon was made in the first place. The meaning behind the creation of this dungeon probably went over his head. Of course, the traps in here are probably unknown to him. He probably… just went around and destroyed towers," I said.

"You're right!"

"You have a point, Master!"

"And I'm sure he's shaking because he didn't get first place. I suddenly took his place, so I'm sure…"

[God of Sacrifice and Revival! Hyo-Yeol!]

*"Did he contact you because he wants to meet me?"*

[…]

*"…"*

[That's right…]

*"Did he really think that I would agree to meet him?"*

[…]

"*Hahahahaha!* Did he really think that?"

[G-God of Sacrifice and Revival…]

*"No, I should meet him. However, I'm only going to meet him once the dungeon has opened and once I'm done talking with the players coming out of the dungeon."*

[*Ah…* okay.]

*"I'm not someone he can meet just because he wants to meet me. Tell him to grab a number and line up if he wants to meet me."*

[Yes, of course. We need to pay him back!]

*"I'm going to talk with the people here."*

As expected…

"Congratulations on surviving the Beginner's Trial."

"…"

"I'm the leader of the Goddess of Flower and Fertility familia…"

"I'm the master of the Holy Night familia…"

"Hello! My familia is the Leather…"

I received many requests for a handshake. This was something that was supposed to happen to Woo Hyo-Yeol.

*'I'm sure he's an attention-seeker as well.'*

I was certain of it.

# CHAPTER 1091
# FAMILIA (1)

The Beginner's Forest was the stage for the mainstream Beginner's Trial, and it was larger than I had imagined. I wasn't sure about its exact size, but it was roughly about the size of Laios. Unlike our continent, where each nation or region had its own tutorial dungeon, many countries were around this forest.

Of course, Koreans weren't the only ones who got summoned here. There were many paths one could take once the tutorial was over, so people of the same nationality couldn't really group up.

Some exited the forest through the north and signed a contract with the nations in the north, while others exited the forest through the east and joined forces with the people there. Those who went south would probably join the oceanic nations.

Basically, the players couldn't choose anything. I was sure the beginners who had just finished the tutorial were too busy thinking about where they were going to grow strong and where they were going to settle down.

"That's why…" I said.

"That's right."

"Each nation had signed an agreement. In a way, this is more convenient for the players," the leader of the Goddess of Flower and Fertility Familia said.

"*Ah…*"

"There's a law that allows the familias to move freely between nations for two months after the end of the mainstream Beginner's Trial. Before that,

the players could move between nations, but there were issues with the visas, so this made things a lot better," they continued.

"Is that what the higher-ups…"

"Yes, it's what they wanted. Many nations thought negatively about the transit law… but they couldn't ignore the higher-ups or the people who wanted it," they answered.

"I see. But… how did you know I would come out through here?" I asked.

"The Goddess of Flower and Fertility gave me a hint. She's not the type to express her opinion, but she told us to come here no matter what. We were kind of confused at first, but after seeing you, we finally understood why she told us that.

"No one has ever raided the Beginner's Trial like you did," they replied.

"You're too kind," I said.

I glanced to the side and saw people looking at me.

*'Familia of Flower and Fertility.'*

The first familia to interview me. There were many familias outside the forest, so the fact that they were first gave me an idea about their standing in the Rohen Continent.

This familia had a long history and tradition. They were active in the sunniest places. In addition to being at the top among the mainstream familias, they were also famous for providing full support. The interesting thing about them was that…

*'I can clearly see what the Goddess of Flower and Fertility likes.'*

Everyone was handsome and beautiful.

Of course, there were only six people here, but they were so good-looking that they took my breath away. Some had a similar style to Elias, while others were like Rafael.

Regardless of age or gender, they looked like a group of celebrities, even though it was clear that they were from different parts of the world.

If someone were to ask me if they were *just* good-looking, I'd say no. I looked at them using Mind's Eye, and I understood why the Flower and Fertility Familia was popular in Rohen.

William Froud was the name of the Flower and Fertility Familia's leader.

I wasn't sure if he was a noble, but everything about him made him look like a noble.

I wouldn't be surprised if he had some kind of noble title somewhere in Europe. Unlike Hyo-Yeol, whose platinum-blond hair was neatly swept back, which made him look tacky, William looked like he was born with it.

He had true platinum-blond hair that couldn't be compared to cheap hair dye.

And his weapon was amazing as well…

*'A rapier?'*

The fancy sword hanging from his waist wasn't an accessory. His abilities and traits were befitting a swordsman, so I could imagine how skilled he was with that rapier. He was the best of the best. That was what I thought about William Froud.

It seemed difficult to use, but it made the user look formal and polite. The weapon also allowed him to exude the classiness of an upper-class member. His speech and gestures seemed considerate of others, and everything about him felt like he was being considerate of me.

“You… underestimate yourself too much, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” William said.

“Excuse me?”

“Physical strength isn’t everything. I believe there is a lot of potential hidden inside you. No, it's not that simple,” he said.

He even speaks warmly. Maybe it’s because he’s the leader of a familia, but he gave off a similar atmosphere as the Goddess of Flower and Fertility.

*‘They pick those who resemble them. Earlier, I actually heard a mistress talking in the Mistress of the Holy Night familia.’*

Unfortunately, I couldn't see the familia of the Slender Tentacle Queen, but perhaps that was a good thing.

“Now… can I ask what will happen now?” I asked.

“Of course, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” William replied.

“Actually, before that… where are the other survivors?” I asked.

*‘I’m sure they’re getting ready to be trained somewhere.’*

“The other survivors will undergo a short training under the guidance of the educational institute managed by their respective countries,” William answered.

“*Ah…*”

“I’m sure you learned many things in the tutorial dungeon and the Beginner’s Trial, but Rohen is much more dangerous and scarier. The course will last for about a month, and during that time, you’ll have the chance to speak with the other familias,” William said.

“…”

“Of course, if you don’t want to do that, you can just join us, but I recommend taking the courses offered here. The higher-ups also recommend that players complete this one-month course, and everyone who completes the course will be given three thousand coins,” William explained.

*‘That’s it?’*

No, it wasn't much for me, but that wasn't the case for the others. Some were struggling because they had no coins. With three thousand coins, they could try to get a job as a combatant. They could buy beginner-exclusive equipment and go on a hunt.

They could also use that to open a business.

“I’m sure the Goddess of Flower and Fertility will scold me for saying this… but you must see and experience many things to know what you truly want, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Although I think you would fit right in with the Flower and Fertility familia…” William said.

“Leader, you should be trying to get him to join us…” a member chimed in.

“Should we tell the Goddess of Flower and Fertility about this?” another member questioned.

“*Wheeew…”*

*‘He’s a good man and is respectful to those working under him.’*

It would have been better if he had been the regressor.

“Do… you have any other questions, Mr. Lee Ki-Young?” he asked.

“I don’t think so,” I answered.

“…”

“If I consider joining your familia… could I get the financial statements,

dungeon raid logs, the list of items you have, and personal information of players in the familia?" I asked.

"…"

"Please?" I added.

"That's—"

I knew it was a ridiculous request, but…

"Stop, Emilia," William said. It seemed that he wasn't bothered by it.

"Leader!" Emilia shouted.

"If you're curious, I can show them to you, but some details are hidden due to security reasons. Is that okay?" William asked.

"Yes… of course," I answered.

"Leader, you can't. We can't reveal the information about our familia to an outsider who might join another familia. Even if you keep some of the information hidden, your actions could become problematic," Emilia argued.

"…"

"He has a meeting with… the Mistress of the Holy Night familia. Did you know that? Think about the familias he'll be meeting next month…" Emilia added.

Emilia seemed to be an administrative staff, and she didn't like my request.

However, William remained generous despite my ridiculous request.

"He's not that kind of person, Emilia. You're not questioning the goddess, are you?" William questioned.

"Of course not!" Emilia shouted.

“I’ll make sure to prepare the things you asked right away, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” William said.

I wasn’t sure if William was a pushover or mature, but he looked at me while smiling quietly. I wasn’t sure why he said that I wasn’t *that* kind of person, but he was simply showing his confidence in me. It was like he was saying that it wouldn’t be a problem even if I leaked their information.

I nodded at his gesture.

*Creaaak!*

I heard a *creak*, and I saw that the door was being opened.

*‘What the heck?’*

“There you are.”

*‘What the hell? How did he get here?’*

I saw a familiar face. He looked and acted like a thug. He had tacky platinum blond hair that couldn't be compared to William’s hair. His face was full of piercings, and he was none other than…

*‘Hyo-Yeol.’*

Everyone looked at him, and the familia members were surprised as well.

They seemed confused about what was happening right now.

“So you’re hanging out with a bunch of jerks with flowers on their heads,” Woo Hyo-Yeol insulted.

Of course, I was shocked. A player who had just finished the tutorial suddenly barged into the meeting room. Humans tend to space out when they suddenly find themselves in an unimaginable situation…

William, Emilia, and the familia members stared in a daze at the newcomer.

“You’re—”

“Please leave. I think you’re in the wrong room,” William interrupted him.

“The Flower and Fertility Familia has reserved this meeting room until 4 p.m. on the third…”

“There must be some kind of misunderstanding. One moment…”

I couldn’t help but think that *someone* had entered the wrong room. Unless one were crazy, one wouldn’t be able to just barge into a room full of notable figures. Even experienced players couldn't treat this familia in a rude way, so it was absurd that a newbie guy who had just finished the tutorial dungeon was behaving this way.

Two players walked up to Hyo-Yeol and attempted to restrain him, but Woo Hyo-Yeol continued walking and even slapped their hands away.

“What? What are you going to do about it?” Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

Woo Hyo-Yeol walked in like a thug and sat on a chair before placing his feet on the table.

*‘Is he crazy?’*

I was really bothered by how close his feet were to the tea and snacks. As one of the owners of the Blue Guild, I knew how much work they had put into preparing those snacks and tea, and I felt even more bothered by Woo Hyo-Yeol's actions.

*‘Is he a lunatic? Does he already want to go to his next life?’*

He was out of his mind.

“You must be Lee Ki-Young,” Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

“…”

*Boom!*

William started emitting a strange energy.

“Please. Leave,” William said.

“…”

“…”

“What if…” Woo Hyo-Yeol paused.

“…”

“What if I don’t want to?” Woo Hyo-Yeol asked.

# CHAPTER 1092
# FAMILIA (2)

“Please. Leave,” William said.

I felt an intense pressure weighing down on me. Will was emitting an otherworldly energy that quickly filled the room.

*‘Haa… ’*

He was doing it in a way that wouldn't affect me. He was a powerful Level 5 Adventurer, so I knew that he had some tricks up his sleeves. However, I couldn't help but think that he was really experienced at wielding magic spells.

William was simply showing Woo Hyo-Yeol the difference in power between the two of them, but I was sure pressure wasn't the only thing that the latter could feel.

Woo Hyo-Yeol was trembling, and I was sure that he couldn’t control his body at the moment. I actually believed that there was a chance that he would end up peeing his pants.

I was sure Woo Hyo-Yeol felt like dozens of thorns had pierced him, and he couldn't do anything about them. He thought William was a weakling, but that was obviously not the case. I was certain that Woo Hyo-Yeol thought that William wasn't even a human being.

William probably looked like a predator capable of devouring him in one bite.

Woo Hyo-Yeol definitely thought that way, but despite that, he…

“What if…” Woo Hyo-Yeol mumbled.

"…"

"What if I don't want to leave?"

*'Level 3?'*

It was amazing that he was already Level 3, even though the tutorial dungeon had just ended. However, he was a regressor, so it wasn't actually *that* amazing. It was actually within my expectations, but the difference between Level 3 and Level 5 was huge.

If I were to categorize them using our continent's power ranking system, the difference between the two would be between Rare and Epic as well as Rare to Legendary. It was like the difference between Kim Hyun-Sung, who had just come out of the tutorial dungeon, and Cha Hee-Ra, who had reached a certain level outside.

Will could definitely wring his head off his shoulders, and Woo Hyo-Yeol was certainly aware that Will could do that, but…

"What if I don't want to?" Woo Hyo-Yeol repeated.

"You…"

"What? Are you going to beat me to death?" Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

*'I thought he was the type to act recklessly.'*

I definitely thought that he was reckless, but… I could tell that he was making his move based on the assumption that William, the Head of the Flower and Fertility Familia wouldn't kill him.

"Or are you going to use that pretty little sword of yours to stab me in the throat?" Woo Hyo-Yeol asked.

*'He must… really want to die.'*

Damn it, If I were in William's position, I would kill Woo Hyo-Yeol right away. I wouldn't care, even if he was a beginner who had just come out of the tutorial dungeon.

However, Will wasn't *that* type of person. His valuable principles wouldn't let him do something like that. I believed every member of the Flower and Fertility Familia had that kind of trait, and they all had faith in the order and goodness in everyone's heart.

It was hard to believe that there were people like him who valued justice and wouldn't hesitate to throw themselves into the fire if it was the right thing to do. Basically, he wasn't the type of person who'd kill Woo Hyo-Yeol just because the latter had provoked him.

*'It's suffocating.'*

Woo Hyo-Yeol had a lot of information about William. He probably knew how Will was going to act, which was why he called him a bastard with nothing but flowers in his head and did as he pleased.

*'I like this jerk… more than I thought.'*

As expected…

"I won't kill you," William said.

"…"

"However, I can fix that attitude of yours," William added.

"That sounds like fun," Woo Hyo-Yeol commented.

"People like you do appear every year, and they're mostly beginners who cleared the Beginner's Trial with a high score. They're talented in this field and are different from the others, allowing them to adapt quickly to the Rohen Continent," William said.

"..."

"However, only twenty to thirty percent of those players would end up surviving for the long-term. Many of them ended up losing their lives in ridiculous situations, as they were too overconfident in their abilities," William continued.

"So what is it you want to say?" Woo Hyo-Yeol asked.

"I'm your senior on this continent, and I want to teach you a lesson," William replied.

"So you want to fight? Is that it?" Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

*'When was the last time I heard someone say those words?'*

I had no idea, and I also had no idea about when was the last time I saw someone like Will.

*'There has to be a limit to someone's kindness.'*

William was more interested in teaching Woo Hyo-Yeol a lesson rather than using a spar as an excuse to beat him up. He even seemed to admire Woo Hyo-Yeol for being talented and passionate.

He seemed to be thinking that since this newbie, who had cleared the Beginner's Trial, could endure the pressure of a Level 5 adventurer, he'd contribute a lot to the Rohen Continent and become helpful once he had grown into a fine young man.

*'Has he not considered the possibility that Woo Hyo-Yeol could backstab him?'*

Woo Hyo-Yeol wasn't lying when he said that William's head was filled with flowers, and there was indeed an issue with Will's personality. He could actually forgive the irredeemable psychopath, and it seemed like he was planning on asking Woo Hyo-Yeol for help.

I believed that William had to kill Woo Hyo-Yeol while he still had the chance to do so, or things would become problematic for him later down the road.

Of course, the future was unknown to me, so I was simply guessing. However, Woo Hyo-Yeol's hostile glare made me think that he didn't like William's attitude or he simply disliked him all this while.

Clearly, these two were polar opposites.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young, I apologize for the rudeness," William apologized.

"Don't worry about me, Mr. Will—William," I said.

Our meeting was about to end anyway.

"We can finish our conversation another time. I'll be going then…" I said.

"Wait. Did I say you could leave?" Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

"…"

"Strictly speaking, I have business with you, not with these idiots…" Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

"You-"

"It's fine, Mr. William. It looks like he has business with me… but it does seem like you two have something to resolve before talking to me… Would it be okay if I stayed longer?" I asked.

"Yes, of course," William answered.

I wanted to watch their fight.

Nothing too dramatic happened.

Woo Hyo-Yeol moved while smirking, and William remained silent. The members of the Flower and Fertility warned him saying that another familia

could have schemed all this, but their words couldn't change William's goal to fix the rookie's behavior.

"I won't use my magic spells, and I'll only use one arm," William said.

"I was waiting for you to say that. Do whatever you want since I'm not going to be one suffering for it," Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

*'I should stream this. This is good content.'*

I was sure Woo Hyo-Yeol was streaming this as well. Many people entered the room, but I ignored them all. The higher-ups, who had just realized that this wasn't a casual stream, were unusually silent.

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ is certain her child will punish that immature jerk.]

*'By why is the goddess here?'*

[The Wolf Crying Under the Crescent Moon said that it's hard to know who will win. They have been watching Player Woo Hyo-Yeol since the tutorial dungeon, and William is suffering from a penalty, so…]

[The God of Sunset♥ is worried that you're going to hang out with the wrong people.]

*'I'm not a kid.'*

*'What is he worried about? I don't hang out with bad kids.'*

Of course, I wasn't in the best situation, as I had basically joined their fight.

I felt like Woo Hyo-Yeol was transforming all this into some high school drama.

The overall reaction was pretty good. The situation needed no explanation, and the sudden event made everyone focus on the scene with rapt attention.

William was a well-known adventurer in Rohen, while Woo Hyo-Yeol was a new adventurer whom everyone had their eyes on, so what more was there to say about this event?

Everyone knew what was going to happen.

I couldn’t even imagine Woo Hyo-Yeol winning this fight. William could use only one arm as a handicap, and he couldn't use his magic spells as well. However, the difference in their stats was overwhelming.

If Woo Hyo-Yeol's opponent were just an ordinary Level 5 player, then he'd have a chance, but he was fighting William. In addition to his higher stats, he also specialized in swordsmanship and close-quarter combat. They probably specialized in different things, but William was a genius as well.

“Aren’t you worried about your reputation once I've beaten you to a pulp?” Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

“…”

“I don’t intend on spreading dirty rumors or anything, but I’m sure the Goddess of Flower and Fertility, the one you admire so much, will be heartbroken,” Woo Hyo-Yeol provoked.

“…”

Unlike Woo Hyo-Yeol, who was still yapping, William remained silent.

*Bam!*

Woo Hyo-Yeol stomped forward with his two daggers in hand and charged at William. It happened suddenly, but I wasn’t shocked. William, his sword with one arm behind his back looked like the epitome of an adventurer.

I believed he was thinking about taking advantage of his sword's strengths. His sword was made for thrusts, and he thrust it toward Woo Hyo-Yeol.

It seemed like he had done that to counterattack, but it wasn't that simple.

Woo Hyo-Yeol would die if he ended up getting stabbed. I felt like Woo Hyo-Yeol was too slow to keep up with William's speed, but I was sure that Woo Hyo-Yeol wouldn't get stabbed. William's attack was too fast, but Woo Hyo-Yeol was familiar with the former's swordsmanship.

*'That's clever.'*

I was sure Woo Hyo-Yeol knew what William could do, his habits, and his unique skills.

There was no need for Woo Hyo-Yeol to analyze William, as his body moved automatically based on the little knowledge he had about William.

Woo Hyo-Yeol slid and dodged William's sword, and then he threw one of his daggers at the latter. I wasn't sure whether it was a trick to catch William off-guard, but he had too much experience to get caught off-guard by that.

William turned to the side to dodge, but Woo Hyo-Yeol's foot flew toward the former's face. Instead of moving away, William raised his sword again and thrust it toward Woo Hyo-Yeol's foot.

*'He's going to get a hole in his foot.'*

And that was when Woo Hyo-Yeol's foot turned in a strange direction. It looked strange because his feet resembled a whip at the moment.

*'Impossible.'*

The word "flexible" wasn't enough to describe Woo Hyo-Yeol's movement, and I couldn't help but think that perhaps he had a few extra joints to use. Otherwise, he couldn't have made such a bizarre movement.

However, William simply raised his knee to block the oncoming attack.

*'It was a nice attempt.'*

Woo Hyo-Yeol's physical stats were low. If the two had the same stats, Woo Hyo-Yeol would have landed an attack on William, but Woo Hyo-Yeol was just Level 3.

*Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh!*

I heard multiple noises at once as holes were made in Woo Hyo-Yeol.

Woo Hyo-Yeol collapsed while bleeding profusely. He had made just one mistake, but it had proven fatal.

*'That psycho.'*

It was such a disgraceful sight. The only thing worth praising was the fact that he hadn't screamed at all.

*'I'd expect nothing less from Will. I believed in him, damn it.'*

I flinched without realizing it. My DNA, which would always surrender to those who were strong, was drawn to William, not to Woo Hyo-Yeol.

"Mr. William! A-Are you okay?" I asked.

Woo Hyo-Yeol had collapsed, but I was more worried about Mr. William's knee.

"M-Mr. William," I stammered.

"I'm fine," William answered.

"I clearly saw you getting attacked… *Ah*… Mr… William? *Ah!*" I shouted.

I pretended to be relieved upon seeing Woo Hyo-Yeol on the ground.

*'Did I get enough brownie points?'*

"Y-You won. Y-You should hurry and get some treatment," I suggested.

“The priest of the familia can treat him… I’m fine, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” he reassured me.

*‘I know that, but I can’t help but feel worried. You’re a model adventurer.’*

“Emilia, please treat his wounds, and Sumad, please take Mr. Lee Ki-Young…”

And that was when I heard a quiet voice…

“Damn it. Who said it was over?” Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

“…”

“Who said it was over? I’m not done yet, you bastard,” Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

Woo Hyo-Yeol was gritting his teeth so hard that his gums were bleeding.

Clearly, he was furious.

“It’s not over yet,” Woo Hyo-Yeol said, and his gaze resembled a beast.

*‘Ah, what a despicable bastard.’*

# CHAPTER 1093
# FAMILIA (3)

*'You don't look cool at all.'*

I found it absurd how Woo Hyo-Yeol exploded in fury as soon as he stood up.

Perhaps he had yet to realize the fact that William had won the moment he gave the latter an opening, but I was sure he knew that fact as well. After all, he had enough experience under his belt.

In other words, he knew that Will could have killed him. He could have left deep holes in him instead of just wounding him, and he could have stabbed his heart instead of his shoulder and abdomen.

The only reason Woo Hyo-Yeol was still alive was the fact that he was a novice who had just cleared the tutorial dungeon.

That was the only reason…

*'But he's acting out of line again.'*

As if he was trying to show that there was nothing more disgraceful than being a sore loser, he kept acting like a pathetic fool. Spite and evil intent replaced his relaxed and cocky behavior. I could even feel a murderous intent coming from him.

"Please accept defeat," William said.

"Defeat? Don't make me laugh, damn it. You want me to admit defeat when I have just a few shallow holes in my body?" Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

"…"

“I’m not done yet, so grab your sword, you bastard,” Woo Hyo-Yeol continued.

“…”

I had to say something here.

“That’s rude.”

“What did you say?” Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

“You would’ve died if Mr. William hadn't shown you mercy. Do you still not understand that?” I asked.

“*Haa*… You too…” Woo Hyo-Yeol sighed.

“Moreover, if you did something wrong, you should apologize,” I added.

“…”

“You’re strong and even stronger than me. Of course… you’ll get stronger in the future. Take this defeat as a lesson… Actually… I think you should get your wounds treated first,” I suggested.

A sister-in-law trying to stop you from doing something was more hateful than a mother-in-law who would often beat the crap out of you, especially when the former had no printer, just fax. To add to that, he seemed like he wasn’t used to receiving pity.

I took out my special potion and walked up to Woo Hyo-Yeol, but he slapped my hand away and stood up. My special potion fell to the floor with a *clank.*

“*Ah.*”

I was sad. He had definitely come here for me, but he wasn’t even looking at me anymore. He was busy glaring at Will, who had humiliated him. Actually, he seemed obsessed about defeating Will.

*‘His personal matter is none of my business.’*

Usually…

*‘There's usually a story behind something like this. Is it safe to assume that?’*

It could be nothing, or he could simply be angry. No one liked losing, but in Woo Hyo-Yeol's eyes, losing could be something more than just losing.

I had no idea what example would be suitable, but it was like he was scared of getting eliminated. Actually, he seemed to be thinking that admitting defeat equaled death. It wasn’t something that an ordinary individual born and raised in an ordinary society would think. He was like a wild animal or someone living a life away from civilization.

*‘He’s not some gladiator who lived in the Roman era and got eliminated.’*

However, I assumed that he lived a similar life on Earth or in his past life.

It had to have been a life where victory meant survival.

Strangely, he had some similarities to Yul-Ha. I was thinking about his idea that if one were incompetent to be acknowledged, one would be abandoned.

Anyway, Woo Hyo-Yeol wasn’t smart enough to make his own decisions, but he wasn’t an idiot. He had a natural hunter’s instinct. The fact that he had William’s handicap of not using any magic spells and having one arm behind his back meant that Woo Hyo-Yeol had sacrificed his pride so that he wouldn't lose.

Despite giving up his pride, he was defeated, and he even received sympathy from the mysterious swordsman who messed him up in the tutorial dungeon.

“Damn it… damn it!” Woo Hyo-Yeol shouted.

“You might die,” William warned.

“Do it. Try killing me! You bastard!” Woo Hyo-Yeol provoked and charged at William while foaming at the mouth. The sight made me think that William’s rapier would pierce him soon, but…

*‘He is a good fighter.’*

Woo Hyo-Yeol’s anger drove him forward, and I saw him dodge William’s rapier.

William's rapier was moving so fast that I thought it was omnipresent in the room, but Woo Hyo-Yeol was dodging the attacks with amazing speed. He was moving in a way that ignored the fundamentals written in many swordsmanship textbooks.

He tilted his head to dodge a thrust and swept across the ground with his leg before counterattacking. An ordinary person couldn't do something like this.

Basically, Woo Hyo-Yeol was coded with the ability to swing his sword in any stance. I didn't see him changing his swing to a thrust. He was skillful enough to skip any unnecessary movement between the swing and the thrust.

As expected, William was surprised, but he wasn’t getting pushed back. He was so calm that I wondered if the word "surprised" was the right word to use to describe his reaction, but it didn’t take long for his expression to change.

*‘You jerk! Damn it!’*

Woo Hyo-Yeol bent backward to dodge and threw his sword into the air as a distraction. Then, he grabbed some dirt on the ground. William couldn't see it because he was distracted by the flying sword.

William stepped to the side to avoid the oncoming sword, but Woo Hyo-Yeol threw a handful of dirt at him. It was a dirty trick that was useless against the master adventurer, but William had no choice but to retreat upon getting hit by the dirt.

Woo Hyo-Yeol lashed out with a low kick, and it connected with William's thigh with a *bam*.

"*Haha!*" Woo Hyo-Yeol laughed.

Obviously, it wasn't effective. The kick was too weak to break William's leg or make him fall to the ground, but it was enough to say that Woo Hyo-Yeol had the upper hand right now.

*'Ha.'*

Woo Hyo-Yeol swung his sword as if he were going to crush Will's head.

William raised his rapier and blocked the attack, but Woo Hyo-Yeol let go of his sword and pulled William in with his bare hand.

William reached out for Woo Hyo-Yeol's hand holding the sword, and I saw Woo Hyo-Yeol grabbing William's wrist in response so that the latter couldn't swing his rapier.

Then, Woo Hyo-Yeol let go of William and ripped his tattered clothes before quickly tying their hands together. It seemed like his goal was to handcuff himself with William. I was surprised by how fast he performed such a complex movement.

"What are you going to do now? *Huh?!*" Woo Hyo-Yeol provoked him.

Woo Hyo-Yeol punched Will's head.

*'Damn it… damn it… '*

William's movement was limited, as he could only move his head. Fist after fist landed on William's face, but there wasn't anything he could do about it.

*'One arm.'*

It was all because he had promised to use only one arm, and he couldn't even

push him away using magic, as he had promised not to use any magic spells as well.

*'What the hell?'*

*Bam! Bam! Bam!*

"What are you going to do now? Huh?!" Woo Hyo-Yeol asked.

*Bam! Boom! Bam! Bam!*

Woo Hyo-Yeol attacked relentlessly.

William swung his hand holding the rapier to shake him off, but Woo Hyo-Yeol moved closer to the rapier to ensure that William wouldn't be able to shake him off. He swung his fist as if he had seen through Will's actions.

William was taking more and more damage from Woo Hyo-Yeol's fist.

"*Hahaha! Hahahaha! Hahaha!*"

*'He's not laughing with him.'*

Will's pretty face revealed a frown, and it was all because his Endurance wasn't that high. Woo Hyo-Yeol's punches weren't that strong, but they were strengthened by magic, so they drew blood from Will.

He was talking so many attacks to the point that I was getting worried that he would end up dying, but…

*'He's a model adventurer.'*

William was still not using his other arm, and he wasn't using his magic spells as well.

*'It's cool, but it's stupid. Damn it. So there's a reason why Woo Hyo-Yeol was chosen to become the regressor.'*

Of course, he was strong, but it was only natural due to the fact that he had the regressor buff. What was more important was his attitude toward life. Although he was an arrogant scum, his will to achieve his goal was stronger than anyone else. He couldn't care less, even if he looked disgraceful or mean.

He was capable of shrugging off any criticism toward him.

All he cared about was achieving his goal. His first goal was probably meeting me, and his second goal was probably defeating William. In the end, he achieved both. It'd be annoying if he became an enemy, and I liked him as well.

"What did you say? Fix my attitude? Say it again. Who's fixing whose attitude?" Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

"…"

"You annoying bastard! Does it hurt? It hurts, right?" Woo Hyo-Yeol continued.

It kind of bothered me that he was rude, but…

*'This jerk… '*

"…"

*'I want to train him.'*

If I used him in the right situation, he could become a trustworthy person. If I could just put a collar on him, what if I gave him goals instead of letting him decide his own goals?

*'And what about the Regressor Instruction Manual?'*

How could I use him? Of course, there were conditions.

*‘I need to fix that attitude of his first.’*

William was correct.

Woo Hyo-Yeol's attitude needed correction, so I sent a message to William.

[From now on, I want you to move as I say.]

“???”

[Step back. Move left and right like you did earlier. That’s it. Don’t be alarmed if he follows you. Wait. Stop! You’re doing great. Do the same routine again. He’s going to stop soon, so I think you can just kick him—*Ah!*

[It’s okay if your attack doesn’t land because shaking off his hand is a top priority here. That’s right. You’re doing great. Why have you been letting him hit you all this while?]

“…”

“What? What can you do now?” Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

“…”

“Do you really think that things will change by shaking off my hand?” Woo Hyo-Yeol added.

[It’s a lot of damage, and it’ll be funny if you lose, right? Your swordsmanship…]

*‘It’s nice, but it’s like he can't do anything else other than sword thrusts… ’*

The best thing to do here was to develop William's strengths, but Woo Hyo-Yeol was learning about William’s swordsmanship in real time. Having been forced to eat some knuckle sandwiches, Woo Hyo-Yeol dared not put his guard down.

However, he had to be taught a lesson.

*'Thronus… is similar to him. I think… '*

Thronus was the best at sword thrusts out of every swordsman I was familiar with. It went without saying that he was capable of following up with just about any attack after just one thrust.

[Would you like to learn something new?]

"…"

And then…

"…"

"I-Impossible…" William mumbled as he looked down at his hand.

"H-How did I… How… What I did… just now…" William said.

*'Yeah, you did do it.'*

"This swordsmanship… how in the world…"

*'Made in Thronus.'*

Woo Hyo-Yeol was sprawled out below him with injuries all over his body. He was unconscious, of course.

"…"

"…"

"Mr. William, would it be okay… to move him to the infirmary?" I asked.

It was an obvious result.

# CHAPTER 1094
# WOO HYO-YEOL (1)

The only thing Woo Hyo-Yeol knew about Will was the latter's swordsmanship. Although he scratched William's roots as an adventurer by using witty movements as well as nasty and mean tricks, William easily gained the upper hand upon escaping from Woo Hyo-Yeol's cowardly trap.

*'He would have achieved it even without Thronus'* sword technique.'

William simply needed an unexpected move that would catch Woo Hyo-Yeol off guard, so Thronus' sword technique wasn't exactly necessary there.

In this case, the unexpected move was a high-level swordsmanship, so the result was pretty obvious. The winner was decided in less than a minute. Woo Hyo-Yeol was forced into a corner by the abrupt change, and he screamed desperately. He couldn't withstand William's attack. He clung to William more persistently than ever, but he couldn't get close to him. Afterward, he got beaten up like dust on a rainy day.

"Mr. William, would it be okay to move him… to the infirmary?" I asked.

The problem was that William, who had wielded Thornus' sword technique to defeat Woo Hyo-Yeol, seemed more shocked than I thought. He also seemed more dazed than the unconscious Woo Hyo-Yeol.

"Mr. William?" I called out.

"…"

He cast a dumbfounded gaze at his hands, and his face started shaking as well. He clearly unleashed the sword technique with his own hands, but…

*'It feels off.'*

He suddenly heard a mysterious voice, and he simply followed that voice, but I was sure he was still confused. Then, I saw him glance at me. He seemed suspicious of me, but I didn't need to hide it.

I'd gain nothing from hiding it, and since William was part of a major familia who was interested in me, I obviously had to leave a good impression on him. If I had to get rid of Woo Hyo-Yeol completely, then the next useful person would be him.

*'I need to leave a good impression just in case.'*

"Mr. William, would it be okay if I moved Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol to the infirmary?" I asked again.

"Yes… of… course. Wait, we'll…" William mumbled.

"I'd appreciate it if you could move him for me. I don't think I can move him by myself," I said.

*'He obviously looks heavy.'*

"B-But…" William paused.

"Yes?"

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young just now…" William paused again.

"Yes?"

"Actually… it's nothing," William said.

"*Ah!* I did help you," I told him.

I was sure it was a surprise. Was I the only one who heard a *thud?* William looked so confused right now. It seemed like he was questioning the sword technique that he had learned rather than thinking about how to convey his thoughts.

He seemed to be questioning how I knew this invincible sword technique that was so strong that it seemed like it was made by a transcendent being.

“I’m sorry if I was being cocky,” I said.

“No, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. It’s not that… It’s just…” William paused.

*‘How did I know?’*

“I simply delivered whatever popped into my head,” I said.

“…”

“…”

A genius. One couldn't keep a sharp spike hidden in a pocket.

A genius would reveal their talent without realizing it.

“I-Impossible…” William mumbled without realizing it.

According to my lore, I possessed knowledge worthy of receiving the title "Unrivaled Genius of the Sword."

“I-Is it okay for me to accept this?” William asked.

“No,” I answered.

“…”

“It doesn’t suit you. You should only use it in urgent situations or whenever a variable is needed. It’s just a sword technique that I imagined in my head, but… it might put your joints and muscles under heavy strain,” I warned him.

“Looks like I won’t be able to hide it. I can feel that heavy strain. I know that I can't use it continuously, but I had no idea that it doesn't suit me at all…” William said.

Well, a transcendent being had made it rather than a human being, so it was only natural that it wasn't suitable for human beings. I was reminded about Thronus' muscle density and joints, and the sight of it convinced me that an ordinary human could only imitate him.

I wasn't saying that William lacked the skills.

It was more like there was an innate difference between the two.

"If you don't mind me giving you advice, I think it's better if you develop your strengths. Of course, I'm not saying to forget what you felt just now… but I think you can learn many things if you use it as a reference," I advised.

"I think I understand what you're saying. I don't know how to thank you for this. I've been feeling like… I ran into a wall… but I didn't think I'd get help like this…" William confessed.

"…"

"Well then, I'll get up first, Mr. Lee Ki-Young," he said.

"Sure. I hope it was helpful," I said.

Since he gained something, I was sure he needed time to organize his thoughts.

Despite knowing that it was rude, Will couldn't stay still at all.

The others asked William about what had transpired, and I saw him mumbling something to them.

I was sure they were questioning how William and I, who had just cleared the tutorial dungeon, could talk about sword techniques, but they'd never understand it.

All they could do was judge based on how obsessed the Goddess of Flower and Fertility was with me. I was sure the familia would soon have a meeting

to share their opinions about this incident with each other, but now wasn't the time to do that.

The calm William moved around desperately like some puppy who needed to relieve itself, and then he explained the situation to his adjutant named Emilia. He kindly approached me again and told me to talk to Emilia if I needed anything.

*'He must have a passion for swordsmanship.'*

The remaining members of the familia moved Woo Hyo-Yeol to the infirmary.

"Can you move him carefully, please?" I requested.

I was sure they had many questions for me, but they couldn't ask anything. Their goddess cherished me, but they didn't need to treat me that way. Despite that, they were probably being obedient, as they could feel something from me.

*'It's obvious. I have the aura and the charisma of someone with power and authority.'*

"This way…" I instructed.

"Understood, Mr. Lee Ki-Young."

I was a natural at giving orders. I was classy but not arrogant. Will wasn't the only noble, as I was noble as well. I had memorized all the necessary etiquettes, so my gestures were basically how a high noble would act.

I was also a mysterious individual whose plans were beyond their understanding.

In fact, even William, their leader, had ended up learning a thing or two from me.

At some point, the Flower and Fertility Familia started treating me like an

important figure without them realizing it. I was sure many of the members wouldn't oppose it if I were to claim that I was the owner of this place.

They were like employees welcoming the CEO who had just returned from a business trip outside. It wasn't important whether this CEO knew about the familiar or Rohen.

*'What matters is who I am and what I can do.'*

'If you need anything, don't hesitate to call for me, Mr. Lee Ki-Young," Emilia said.

"Thank you."

"…"

"*Ah*, could you also send me the documents from the meeting earlier?" I requested.

"Well…" Emilia paused.

"Please, Miss Emilia," I begged.

"*Wheeew…* I understand," she replied.

If I gave them some advice on a few things, they'd surely like me even more. It was a shame that Miss Kim Mi-Young, my right-hand woman, wasn't here, but administrative work was one of my main jobs.

"Please send me the tactical manual of the Flower and Fertility Familia," I added.

"What? Why… do you—"

"Please," I interrupted her.

"I'm sorry, but…" Emilia paused.

“Is it not possible?” I asked.

“I’ll let you know after I ask our leader,” Emilia replied.

“I’m willing to sign a confidentiality agreement, so could you bring me the contract as well?” I requested.

“The confidentiality agreement isn’t the problem… It’s an unreasonable request,” Emilia answered.

“If it’s too much trouble, you don’t have to bring it,” I told her.

*‘I’ll just make a new one.’*

William had promised to show me the familia’s squads anyway. As long as there was a clear distinction, a contract could be easily made.

*‘I’m still an outsider to them.’*

With a little bit of effort, I could turn the things that took them years to make into pieces of garbage. In addition to cutting out the corrupted members of the familia, I could also upgrade them by a few levels.

*‘Why do they have so many employees?’*

The CEO would always restructure their company upon returning from a business deal.

*‘Restructuring is a must.’*

They were wasting funds just for the sake of circulating money.

*‘It looks like they don’t even have a proper strategy team.’*

It was like they had no analysts capable of analyzing many types of battles, such as PvPs or battles against other familias.

Things were different from the continent where I was from. I had dozens of

people with me back there. I couldn't see any commanders capable of discussing dungeons, tactical analysis, and strategies. There weren't any combat experts as well. There was only one member in the familia with a brain, and they had the tactical leader badge.

Of course, they were nothing but monkeys fighting over some territory.

*'And why are they raiding dungeons like this?'*

Were they incapable of investigating things? These primitive bastards would surely be shocked upon seeing this.

*'This is what you call a civilization. Seriously.'*

I had no time to fix every little detail, but it didn't take long for me to draw the overall picture. Even someone with half a brain would realize the value of the simple report in my hands. Willam would surely be surprised by this.

Those deserving respect would be respected. This would work everywhere, and there was no need for me to mention whether I deserved respect or not, as even their goddess had trust in me.

"Miss Emilia," I said.

"I'm sorry, but Miss Emilia is busy with another task…" one of the members answered.

"*Ah,* then, can you deliver my message to Mr. William?" I requested.

"Sure."

Of course, there were exceptions. Strictly speaking, Woo Hyo-Yeol was an exception, as he was a stray dog who had never made a party of his own. Someone's competence was meaningless in his eyes, as he categorized people into only two categories—those in his way and those who weren't in his way.

A person with no social skills was no different from a beast.

*'Just think of him as a stray dog.'*

If I treated him like a stray dog, then…

*'It'll be easy to tame him.'*

The first step wasn't giving him food or training him to be obedient. It was locking him up in a cage. Letting him know that this was his territory and preventing him from leaving this place was the first step.

# CHAPTER 1095
# WOO HYO-YEOL (2)

*'But why isn't this jerk waking up?'*

I felt like Woo Hyo-Yeol was pretending to be asleep because he was embarrassed.

Perhaps his honor was devastated to the point that he couldn't even open his eyes.

*'That's understandable.'*

He had kicked up such a big fuss, but he ended up getting beaten up to the point that he ended up falling unconscious, so it was only natural for him to feel embarrassed. Of course, he was thick-skinned, but this situation was particularly embarrassing for him.

I thought it would be better to leave for a moment, so I went to the bathroom. When I came out, I heard someone shouting inside the room. They were throwing things to the floor as well.

"Shit!"

I instantly realized what was going on.

Woo Hyo-Yeol had woken up and was throwing stuff in the room to the ground.

*'Was he actually pretending to be asleep out of shame?'*

I wasn't certain, but this timing was just perfect.

"Shit!"

"…"

"Shit! Damn it! Damn it!"

*'I shouldn't be getting along with irrational people. Damn it.'*

I had to let him know that I was here.

"…"

I walked quietly and opened the door to the room.

The room was in a mess. Everything was broken. It was like an arrogant stray dog had made a mess in the house, but this arrogant bastard didn't seem like he was going to apologize. He even looked at me with hostility.

"What…" Woo Hyo-Yeol mumbled.

"…"

"What?! What are you looking at?!" he screamed.

"…"

"Get lost," Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

He was behaving this way toward me, as he was too embarrassed to face me.

"…"

"…"

"You're finally awake," I greeted.

"…"

*'How should I approach this?'*

If he were a puppy I had adopted, he would already be wagging his tail, but extreme interest and love were like poison to an injured stray dog. My kindness didn't appear like kindness to me, and he only became even warier of me.

I didn’t say anything, and this probably wasn’t going to help, but I entered the room quietly and started cleaning up his mess.

I kept my distance and acted like I wasn’t really interested in him. It was probably best to let him approach me rather than the other way around. It was a bit embarrassing, but it didn’t take long for his patience to run out.

“Where is that bastard?” Woo Hyo-Yeol asked.

“…”

“I asked you where he is! You creep. Are you deaf?!” Woo Hyo-Yeol screamed.

*‘Who told him my nickname?’*

One of his subscribers had probably told him about him.

*‘He’s definitely a difficult one.’*

Templar Gen and Bahamut were easy to deal with because I had an advantage over them as the saint among saints. Taming religious people was easy because I could just skip putting in the effort, but putting in a bit of effort was necessary when it came to taming ordinary people.

Now that I think about it, Kim Hyun-Sung was in the same position as Woo Hyo-Yeol at first. He didn’t trust others and was extremely wary of outsiders.

The difference was that Kim Hyun-Sung was a wolf who had decided to create a pack, while this guy was a stray dog who was refusing to be with a pack.

I managed to tame Hyun-Sung—no, I became his friend with a true

friendship and deep connection with him all because he had accepted me into his pack. Regardless of what happened, he would take care of his pack.

*'Should I think of this as a long-term project?'*

"Can't you hear me? *Huh?*" Woo Hyo-Yeol asked.

I sighed and was quiet for a while.

"…"

"How rude," I commented.

"Rude or not, just shut up and tell me where that bastard is," Woo Hyo-Yeol demanded.

"I don't know, and even if I knew, I wouldn't tell you," I answered.

"*Haaa,*" Woo Hyo-Yeol sighed.

"You lost. You lost even after you set up that trap, so I don't think anything will change even if you go to him now," I told him.

"What did you say?" Woo Hyo-Yeol questioned.

"Weren't things going your way from beginning to end? From the moment you came to find me to accepting William's handicap. I don't know how you know about him, but you knew him and his habits as well as his sword technique. Despite that… you lost, and there's no excuse for that," I explained.

"Damn it! What do you know?! That bastard—" Woo Hyo-Yeol shouted.

"His sword technique…" I interrupted.

"…"

"It must've changed or something," I continued.

And that was when his violent hand grabbed my neck.

He pushed me into a wall, and his eyes were filled with madness as he lifted me up by my neck.

“So it was you,” Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

*‘You’re smart.’*

“You were behind it,” Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

*‘It took him some time… but he finally caught on.’*

“You rat… You were the one behind it,” Woo Hyo-Yeol added.

*‘At least he’s more quick-witted than Hyun-Sung.’*

If I had to give him a score from zero to a hundred points, I'd give him thirty points.

*‘Actually… ’*

Even if he were dumb, he'd definitely realize that there was a variable, as many things had changed compared to his last life. Someone insignificant had appeared and achieved great results in the Beginner's Trial, and he had also somehow encountered William, whom he had yet to meet at this point in his first life.

My score in the tutorial dungeon probably wasn't that important in his eyes. He had to have comforted himself, saying that he hadn't given it his all. Moreover, he knew that I was blessed by the GENIUSES as well.

He was not aware of their identity, but I was sure someone told him that I was getting help and had received some kind of support. He had to have convinced himself that the support I was receiving had allowed me to achieve a great result.

He also probably found it… strange when I started talking to him.

Woo Hyo-Yeol knew William well. It was none of my business whether they had a bad relationship or not, but Woo Hyo-Yeol definitely knew about William's strengths.

*'That wasn't your first encounter with him, right? Right? That's why you were certain that William hadn't changed.'*

He was convinced that William hadn't changed, but he was proven incorrect. To make matters worse, Will had grown even more powerful despite not showing any signs of that in his past life. The Will he fought wasn't William but something else.

"…"

I didn't know what happened before and after that, but I can guess that one of the guys there made an impact. Of course I gave him a hint, but…

"W-Who are you? You bastard," Woo Hyo-Yeol insulted.

"…"

"Who the hell are you? Why are you suddenly…" Woo Hyo-Yeol paused.

*'He's the one who came to me first.'*

"I…" I paused.

"…"

"I just…" I paused again.

"…"

"I just… heard… someone tell me… to help you," I said.

He let go of me, and I fell to the ground. After taking deep breaths, I got up as

if nothing had happened.

"*Haa…* that's it," I sighed.

"…"

"That… was the promise I made. This is all I can tell you," I told him.

*'I thought he was actually going to break my neck, damn it.'*

Unlike Jung Jin-Ho, the psychopathic murderer, Woo Hyo-Yeol wasn't the type to enjoy slaughter. He probably thought that he'd be at a huge disadvantage if he broke my neck just because I annoyed him.

He had a brain, so he could definitely assess the situation.

I was thankful that he hadn't decided to beat me senseless. Had he thought that I was really frail and light the moment he lifted me by my throat? Was he convinced that I would die if he had decided to beat me up?

Or perhaps he had simply lost all his desire to do anything.

"How did you do it?" Woo Hyo-Yeol asked.

"…"

"…"

"Is there a reason you need to know that?" I asked.

"…"

"Actually, let me reword that. Is that important?" I asked.

*'You lost, and that's it.'*

"Is it important to know the reason and what method I used? You're not the only one who specializes in setting things up. Mr. William is a Level 5

swordsman, but you had the advantage with his handicap," I said.

"…"

"I was caught off guard as well, as I believed that you wouldn't do something like that," I paused.

"…"

"Whether I interfered or not, the fact is you lost, Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol. What if it was just Mr. William? What if he did that on his own?" I questioned.

"Do you know what kind of people I hate the most?" Woo Hyo-Yeol asked.

"…"

"It's rats like you. You ramble on and on, giving me headaches. You're all talk, so stop talking bullshit and—-"

*'Ha.'*

"I'm leaving now," I told him.

"What? You rat! I'm not done talking yet!" Woo Hyo-Yeol shouted.

"I have no reason to talk to you anymore," I said.

"You bastard!" Woo Hyo-Yeol yelled.

I got up as if I didn't want him to grab me.

"I've done my part, and it seems like we don't particularly like each other…" I paused.

"…"

"So we should just go our separate ways, Mr. Woo Hyo-Yeol. I won't get in your way. You're strong and I'm weak. I would like to add one more thing,

and it’s that I’m cheering for you,” I told him.

Saying what I wanted to say and then leaving was a great way to end the conversation.

I didn't answer his question and made him curious with the right amount of bullshit.

I also provoked him while not crossing the line so that he wouldn't have a reason to kill me. I instilled the idea that I wasn’t a true ally, but I wasn’t exactly his enemy either.

Lastly, I glared at him as if I despised people like him.

*‘You don’t want things to end this way, right?’*

*'I'm sure you don’t want our meeting to end this way. You don’t want to end it abruptly like this, right? If we never see each other again, you’ll just end up being frustrated.'*

As expected, Woo Hyo-Yeol screamed and swore at me, but the loyal Flower and Fertility Familia members entered the room and stopped him.

Woo Hyo-Yeol was still recovering, and he was just a Level 3 adventurer, so he couldn’t stop me from leaving. I heard the familia members desperately trying to calm Woo Hyo-Yeol down, as they were worried that I—the owner of the familia—would get injured.

*‘What can he do to me?’*

If things had gone according to his plan, Woo Hyo-Yeol would have wandered the Rohen Continent right after completing the tutorial dungeon and defeating William, but his plan had already been ruined.

Even if that weren't the case, the higher-ups, who had turned him into a regressor, would still not expect him to sit in a month-long training with the other new adventurers.

“So… before the basic training…”

*‘There’s no way he'll do that.’*

I felt Woo Hyo-Yeol glaring at me from behind.

“Last time, we covered the things you needed to know… to learn more about the Rohen Continent…”

I was at the Beginner’s Academy.

“Trainer Lee Ki-Young… can you answer for us?”

“Sure,” I replied.

Needless to say, I was a model student.

# CHAPTER 1096
# WOO HYO-YEOL (3)

[The Goddess of Flower and Fertility♥ supports your life at the academy.]

[The Mistress of the Holy Night♥ is wondering why you joined the academy.]

[He Who Sits on the Golden Throne♥ has donated 1,000 coins.]

[The God of Sunset♥ thinks you made a good choice. He says to always prioritize safety.]

[The Crooked Guardian disapproves of you joining the Beginner's Academy. They say that talented players would have either joined a familia or received a different type of offer. They warn that if you waste your time here, you won't be part of the mainstream.]

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven♥ yells at the Crooked Guardian to shut up. They mock them, saying that they know nothing about your true intentions. They question if all of the Crooked Guardian's players have entered the mainstream.]

[The Slender Tentacle Queen♥ complains about your recent content. She's disappointed because your love for tentacles seems to have faded after your encounter with the Tentacle Goblin.]

[The Lowest Abyss of the Abyss♥ said your content with the tentacles was good, but they also like this content as well. They say that there's something to learn at the Beginner's Academy, and there are many players who joined the mainstream after graduating from the academy.]

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven♥ asks some of the GENIUSES whether the

Beginner's Academy was created with the consent of many GENIUSES or not. They shout, saying that it doesn't matter because you look good in your uniform. They shout out that you look the most lovable out of every student.]

[The Gatekeeper of Heaven♥ has donated 10,000 coins.]

*'The Gatekeeper of Heaven is catching up fast.'*

The God of Sunset was in first place with an overwhelmingly large lead, while the Goddess of Flower and Fertility was right behind him. The two had been boasting about making large donations, but the mortals fighting below them were just as fierce.

Just when I was worried because things had gotten quiet, the Gatekeeper of Heaven opened the floodgates once again, so how could I not be happy?

*'This is what you call loyalty.'*

I was sure my subscribers, who were getting used to the stimulating content, were disappointed about the fact that I had decided to enter the Beginner's Academy.

I was sure they wanted to see me joining a familia or immediately become a part of the mainstream. They definitely wanted to enjoy a huge variety of content, and they also wanted to see me make a name for myself on the Rohen Continent.

They probably expected me to fight tentacle monsters here and there, meet interesting comrades, and have decent character development. Ultimately, they wanted to see me get acknowledged by the people.

Considering the fact that the Beginner's Academy's goal was to help the new adventurers adapt, it was probably strange that I joined the academy.

I was a talented player, and I was the best player in the Beginner's Trial. If I needed lessons on how to adapt, then I could learn those lessons by joining a familia.

It probably seemed like I was intentionally slowing down.

At one point, I was barely getting coins thanks to the grumbling of the anti-fans, but the system had decided to open donation time as if it had read my mind.

*'I was actually running low on funds because we spent so much money on our sets.'*

Another group of loyalists who had emerged from the forest were already working on a huge project. They were building small cities, hunting grounds, and even dungeons, so of course, we were running out of coins.

It was a pretty heartbreaking investment, but…

*'It's an investment for high-quality content… '*

In many ways, this academy project was necessary. Even if it wasn't because of Woo Hyo-Yeol, I needed to buy some time because I couldn't keep doing events that involved tentacles. Although there was nothing better than tentacles when trying to earn coins in a short period of time, stimulating content like that would eventually become boring.

Even if I ended up losing a few subscribers… I needed to figure out which direction I was going to go. Of course, the important thing about this content was Woo Hyo-Yeol.

"As I explained earlier, the vanguards' main job is to protect the rearguards in the party. Priests and mages are always targeted, so if you move with that in mind, you won't be treated poorly no matter where you go.

"If you're scared of getting hurt, then leave the academy now. You can then choose to join a major familia or live as an ordinary adventurer…" the instructor paused.

"…"

“If you've created a party, then you already have team members. If you don’t take care of the rearguard just because you’re scared of getting hurt or dying, then you won’t be accepted anywhere in Rohen, you rookies.

"They aren't here, but the same goes for the rearguards. Since you’re raising your shields for them, they must repay the favor.

"Obviously, priests must protect the vanguards, while mages and archers must eliminate the enemies who can become a threat to the vanguards,” the instructor informed us.

“…”

“I’m sure everyone has played video games before and understands what your instructor is saying, but remember that this isn’t a game but real life. There are no second chances.

"Your mistakes will get you killed, and your selfishness will ruin the party. Even powerful players who toy around with ogres will end up creating their own familias and parties.

"They also need help from others, and there are no rules saying that you can’t become one of those powerful players. Doing your best in your position is the best way to keep your party together and survive,” another instructor explained.

“…”

“Now, let’s learn about party formation and roles so that you won’t look like idiots upon joining a party. It’s probably easier to understand that most, if not all, adventurers stick to the triangle formation. It’s simple, yet difficult,” they explained.

“…”

“The positions of each unit you’re seeing right now are all made by an implicit agreement. If there are special soldiers or people with certain jobs in

your party, then the positions can change, but you can basically think of it as a variation of this triangle formation…" they added.

While everyone was focusing on the lesson, Woo Hyo-Yeol was yawning, and I still couldn't get used to him being in the Beginner's Academy.

It took me a month to create the cage, but I had succeeded in trapping the stray dog.

William and the Flower and Fertility Familia were still in the academy along with me, so Woo Hyo-Yeol couldn't leave.

*'There are too many things for him to do that he can't leave so easily.'*

I was sure Woo Hyo-Yeol had many questions, such as who I was, why I bothered him so much, what changed compared to his past life… and why I was here. To get answers, he had to observe me first. He felt the need to get more information about me, and he also didn't want to lose just like this, so everything worked out in the end.

"There will be a joint class with the others soon. I have surprising news for you, and I'll tell you the news before the class ends. For now, pair up and review the sword technique you just learned," the instructor instructed.

"Okay."

*'That bastard is ending class again. I was wondering why they were working so hard today.'*

The same instructor had created a self-study a few days ago, and I understood why he had done that. Woo Hyo-Yeol had beaten him up because he pointed out the former's attitude in class.

It was already the third day, and in both good and bad ways, Woo Hyo-Yeol was receiving a lot of attention. His talent was great, but his attitude was horrible.

Although many familias were interested in him, it didn't go beyond interest. Of course, this didn't apply to familias like the Flower and Fertility Familia, which had deep history and tradition.

Despite that, Woo Hyo-Yeol was the most popular among the players this year.

*'That's because he's a genius.'*

Everyone knew he was a genius, including the instructors, students, recruiters outside the academy, and the staffers of the familias here.

Reaching Level 3 right after leaving the tutorial dungeon was shocking, as it meant that he had an abnormal growth rate.

However, his level wasn't the most surprising part about him. His battle sense, perception, and instincts were unexplainable by mere stats and levels.

Of course, he wasn't the only one who stood out. Although they weren't as talented as Woo Hyo-Yeol, there were other talented players as well. They were hidden gems, and even though they were slow at adapting, they still survived the tutorial dungeon.

"Ki-Young."

"Yes, noona?" I answered.

"Can you watch me for a second?"

"Of course," I said.

Among them was Lim Cheong-Ha noona…

She was a Level 2 swordsman from Hong Kong, and she completed the Beginner's Trial with decent results. She was known as a swordsman to the public, the information I had seen through my eyes showed that she was a Swordsman of Eleven Swords.

The name of her job was kind of vague, but it was a plus that she had unlocked a hidden class, even though a GENIUS hadn't chosen her yet. The second plus was that she was a hard worker.

“I’m sorry to ask you while you’re training… but I want to get your advice on something. It’s not something we learned during class yesterday. It’s about what you taught me last time…” Lim Cheong-Ha requested.

*‘Ah, about Gen’s skill.’*

“Sure.”

“W-What do you think?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

“I’m not sure if I’m right, but…” I paused.

“Go on,” she urged.

“The sword technique you just showed me. Is it a technique you use with only one sword? I’m sure the technique I taught you… I mean, did you make some changes… so that it fits your style?” I asked.

“*Huh?* How…”

“I was getting the feeling that your other hand wasn’t doing much. If I’m right, then… this was probably what you wanted to do,” I showed her.

“What’s that…?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

*‘What do you mean?’*

“So you put your weight on your left, put your feet here… and then use your arm like this…” I instructed.

“*Ah!* I understand what you’re saying. *Ah! Ahh!* So that’s how you do it!” Lim Cheong-Ha said.

“That’s right,” I said.

“But Ki-Young, can you really see all that?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

“Well, it’s kind of hard to explain, but I can imagine it in my head,” I answered.

“I see. *Oh*… you’re so cute, my lucky charm!” Lim Cheong-Ha said, pinching my cheeks.

“*Ah!* Noona!” I shouted.

*‘She has no boundaries. She’s even pinching my cheeks.’*

She wasn’t actually older than me. I was older than her, but I thought it'd be beneficial if I told her that I was the same age as Woo Hyo-Yeol. The public thought I was twenty-three years old. Of course, I looked like I was twenty-three years old.

Since I wasn't a mortal, I could push it and say that I was nineteen years old.

“How can I thank you for this?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

“Seeing you happy already makes me happy, noona,” I told her.

“Ki-Young, could you help me too…”

“Sure, hyung!” I shouted.

Obviously, Lim Cheong-Ha wasn’t the only person I was maintaining a relationship with. My focus was on her, but there were others worthy of befriending.

*‘Han Seung-Yoon. 28 years old.’*

*'Why does this little guy keep trying to pat my head?'*

“Hyung! Have you finally decided to use a shield?” I asked.

“That’s right, kid. I couldn’t keep using a two-handed sword because you kept insisting that I try using a shield,” Han Seung-Yoon answered.

*‘That’s what I thought. You have no hope without a shield. A two-handed sword is only good if you’re on the same level as Bahamut or Rafael. You don’t have any potential with a sword.*

*'You're smaller than Deok-Gu, but you still have a pretty big build, so being a meat shield is perfect for you.’*

“*Geez*, hyung. Stop… touching my head,” I complained.

“It’s all because you’re so cute, kid. I’m sure I would still be using a two-handed sword if it weren’t for you. Thanks…” Han Seung-Yoon said.

“Actually…”

*‘You’re messing up my hair, man.’*

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young! Can you… help me too…”

“One second, Brand,” I said.

*‘I’m a model student, and I have a good relationship with my friends. I'm also really… diligent.’*

I was getting countless requests for a handshake, and Woo Hyo-Yeol was staring at me while sitting quietly under a tree.

Just then, the instructor finally returned and said, “It’ll be a mock match.”

*‘…’*

“Your next evaluation test is a mock match."

# CHAPTER 1097
# WOO HYO-YEOL (4)

“Your next evaluation test is a mock match," the instructor announced.

“…” “This mock battle won’t just be for swordsmen. It will include all the rearguards, such as priests, hunters, and mages who are taking classes at this academy,” he added.

“…”

“You’ll be split into Groups A and B for the mock battle, and like I said, this is how you’ll be evaluated. The groups will be decided randomly, but we’ll inform you in advance if there have been any adjustments to make the groups balanced,” he continued.

*‘A mock battle? That’s random.’*

I wasn’t the only one rendered speechless, as most of the students couldn’t accept the decision.

*‘Who thought holding a mock battle three days after completing the tutorial dungeon was a good idea?’*

“We’re still adjusting the exact schedule… but…” he paused.

“…”

“Looks like all of you aren’t fond of this idea. I know this is sudden, but…” the instructor said, trailing off.

*‘This isn’t just kind of surprising… ’*

“But remember that not all players are going into battle prepared. A capable

player should be ready at all times. If you utilize the formation you learned today and the things you've learned up until now, you can achieve a good result," explained the instructor.

*'Good result, my ass.'*

A beginner-level triangle formation and a basic sword technique popular during the Bronze Age were the only things we learned over the past three days.

Considering the fact that the first day was an orientation, we had been taking lessons for only the past two days. Except for a few exceptional individuals, most of us were rookies who were fighting as if we were still in the tutorial dungeon.

*'A mock battle with these guys?'*

They cleared the tutorial dungeon, but it didn't mean that they were useful in combat.

The tutorial dungeon here was more difficult than ours, but it was still a tutorial dungeon at the end of the day. The tutorial dungeon was made to test their adaptability and survivability rather than their combat prowess.

The majority of these rookies didn't even know how to create a proper party, so how would they know how to cooperate with their teammates? They had yet to grasp basic swordsmanship knowledge as well.

The tutorial mobs were designed to be taken down by an ordinary adult.

*'You think that's effective?'*

No matter how much I thought about it, the decision didn't make sense, and the incompetency of the Rohen Continent's higher-ups made me groan.

I couldn't help but tap my thigh.

“That’s right, a good result. This is an opportunity for you guys as well. Many familias will be observing…” the instructor informed.

*‘I knew it.’*

“Familias famous across the Rohen Continent, such as the Flower and Fertility, the Mistress of the Holy Night, well-known familias, mid-sized familias that have been in Rohen for a long time, and up-and-coming familias will observe you guys.

"This is a golden opportunity for you to leave a good impression if you couldn't do so in the tutorial dungeon,” he added.

*‘These bastards… ’*

“Of course, the recruiters of each familia might be watching you, too,” he said.

“…”

“I’m sure you guys know better than anyone how important this upcoming mock battle is,” he added.

Their intentions were obvious.

I achieved great results in the Beginner’s Trial while completing all the hidden quests.

Woo Hyo-Yeol was an unrivaled genius who had gained everyone’s attention in the tutorial dungeon. This lineup was bound to make the authorities curious. The GENIUSES had probably pressured them, or an event was perhaps already a part of their plans, but the important thing was that they wanted to see Woo Hyo-Yeol and me.

*‘They’re curious.’*

Anyway, the students were shaken, and many were worried, but when the instructor mentioned the recruiters, an unknown sense of expectation filled

their hearts. This probably sounded like good news to them now.

“Can we think of this as an opportunity?”

“It’s kind of sudden, but… well…”

“I don’t want to mess this up… If we don’t make a good impression here, then it's all over, right?”

“…”

“…”

*‘Woo Hyo-Yeol probably caught on.’*

I turned and saw an excited Woo Hyo-Yeol. He looked like a clumsy punk who had been waiting for P.E. I was convinced that this was my first time seeing him smile.

“It's probably a short time and a long time for some people, while there are some who only need one week to get out of their rookie status. Of course, as your instructor, I believe in your potential,” the instructor mumbled.

“When I think about the things that all of you have shown me, I’m certain that all of you here will achieve good results,” he added.

*‘Did they promise to give him some juicy rewards or something?’*

Was it just me? The students seemed encouraged by the instructor’s words.

“Now, I’ll announce the groups,” he said.

“…”

“Group A will be Woo Hyo-Yeol… Astrid and Maya Ernum,” he announced.

“…”

“Group B will be Lee Ki-Young, Lim Cheong-Ha… and… and…” he trailed off.

*‘I’m not surprised.’*

They rigged the groups so that Woo Hyo-Yeol and I would have to fight each other.

*‘This is ridiculous.’*

If Woo Hyo-Yeol and I were excluded, my group had an advantage. There was a chance that Woo Hyo-Yeol's group members were decided by the instructor who wanted to take revenge for the humiliation on that day.

“All right. That’ll be it for today’s class,” the instructor announced.

“…”

“I'm looking forward to it,” he said.

With that, he left without taking responsibility for his announcement.

I immediately heard mumbling noises around me.

*‘So that’s it? What about the meeting?’*

“It’s a good thing that we’re in the same group. Don’t you agree, Ki-Young?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

“I agree, noona! I’m glad. Come to think of it, Seung-Yoon hyung is also in our group,” I pointed out.

“That’s good. I was actually worried that we wouldn't be in the same group. I can finally relax, but they really are irresponsible. They gave zero information about the mock battle. Are they not going to announce the exact schedule… or the location…?” Lim Cheong-Ha complained.

“I haven’t even seen the faces of the students in the other classes. Isn't that

strange? Ki-Young?" Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

"You're right, noona. I thought they were going to hold a separate meeting, but since they haven't said anything, I think they just want us to handle it on our own," I told her.

"What do you mean?" Lim Cheong-Ha questioned.

"Preparing for the mock battle isn't the only thing we need to do. We need to gather the members *and* prepare for the mock battle. They're basically saying that we're responsible for the entire thing. There won't be a separate training session either

" I checked today's curriculum, but they haven't said anything about practicing for the mock battle. The familias that are going to be spectators probably thought that it's better if the instructors don't get involved as much as possible," I explained.

"Seems that way… To be honest, it's strange to get evaluated based on a mock battle," Lim Cheong-Ha remarked.

"But Ki-Young, what do you think about the popular familias coming to watch?" Han Seung-Yoon asked.

"Their goal is probably to recruit people. Actually…" I paused.

"Yeah?"

"I feel bad for saying this… but the recent tutorial… ended in kind of a strange way," I continued.

My contribution was a hundred percent. Many players wanted to show their potential, but they couldn't do it because of me.

"You're right. There's one guy who earned over 200,000 points," Han Seung-Yoon chimed in.

"*Ah!* Hyung!" I yelled.

"I didn't even see any monsters." Lim Cheong-Ha pointed out.

"Don't lie, noona. I didn't take down a lot of monsters. Actually, it's more like I couldn't," I said.

"*Hoho*, really? Sorry," Lim Cheong-Ha said.

"I'm serious," I said.

"All right, I got it. I was just joking, so stop making that face, Ki-Young. *Aww*… I just want to pinch your cheeks," she teased.

"Stop pinching my cheeks, noona," I said.

"Anyway, so… there's really a chance we might get recruited, right?" Han Seung-Yoon asked.

"I'm sure of it. As long as we catch their attention, I'm sure the familias won't just sit by and do nothing. It'll be a huge event. The GENIUSES are probably watching as well," I answered.

"*Ah*, you're right…" Han Seung-Yoon said.

"Even if none of the familias like us, we just have to catch the attention of a GENIUS. Of course, you don't want to grab their attention for the wrong reasons.

"I think how we socialize with other people is important as well. It probably won't work on GENIUSES looking for a player to join their familia…" I paused.

"*Hm*, you're right," Han Seung-Yoon said.

"So we need to do our best," Lim Cheong-Ha said.

"Yes, so noona," I called out.

“Yeah?”

“I want you to summon the members in our group, but not the members of the swordsmanship class,” I requested.

“*Ah…*”

“I want you to take care of that class, hyung…” I added.

“You’re going to start today? H-How about resting for today? I actually earned some coins, so I can buy you delicious food…” Han Seung-Yoon offered.

“Hyung!” I yelled.

“…”

“We have to start today no matter what. One week isn’t a lot of time…” I told him.

*‘It’s not just short.’*

I couldn't see any way of turning these rookies into expert adventurers in just one week.

*‘It’s so short that it's ridiculous.’*

They could imitate one, but they needed more time to become a party that could go up against Woo Hyo-Yeol. In addition, Woo Hyo-Yeol wasn't alone, so we needed more time.

*‘We have to win no matter what.’*

That way, he'd become even more curious about me…

If he thought that there was nothing special about me, he’d stop being interested in me, and since he was the type who would give me only

attention if he was working under me, then I needed to defeat him with overwhelming power.

If this were to end poorly, he'd have no reason to remain at the academy…

*'There's a chance.'*

The party members just needed to do their job.

We had a really good chance, and they gave us a lot of freedom.

"Hey," someone said from afar.

"Hey!"

*'What now?'*

I turned and saw Woo Hyo-Yeol looking at me while standing arrogantly.

"…"

"…"

"Let's see how things are going to turn out this time, you bastard," Woo Hyo-Yeol said.

"…"

"Let's see… if you can keep running that mouth of yours," he provoked me.

*'I'll just pretend like I didn't hear or see him, damn it.'*

A third-rate thug had just waged war.

"Who's that jerk? He probably thinks that he looks cool by acting like that. How embarrassing…" Lim Cheong-Ha remarked.

"He'll hear you, noona," I warned her.

At this point, I realized that Woo Hyo-Yeol was also concerned about this mock battle.

A few days later, we heard unexpected news.

“Ki-Young!” Lim Cheong-Ha shouted.

“…”

“Ki-Young!!!” Lim Cheong-Ha shouted again.

“…”

“Ki-Young! Did you hear the news?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

“…”

“Did you hear the news about how another academy will come here to join in the mock battle?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

“*Ah!* Noona! I’m washing up right now! Don’t come in!” I shouted.

“It’s Han Sora! Han Sora is coming! One of the top rankers in the recent tutorial. You know her, right?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

The news made me poke my head out.

“Han Sora?” I asked.

“Yeah!”

# CHAPTER 1098
# WOO HYO-YEOL (5)

*'Are this year's trainees really that special… '*

That was all I could think of.

*'I kind of expected that, but… '*

Along with Woo Hyo-Yeol, Han Sora graduated from the tutorial dungeon with good results, but I couldn't erase the feeling that she was getting more attention than I thought.

I was sure many people were talking about her. I hadn't expected that she would stay back at the academy, but she was definitely getting a lot of attention, as people were already calling her "magic genius."

Obviously, those with power on this continent wouldn't just leave her alone. In addition to submitting several offers, they obviously wanted to see her true strength.

Based on Han Sora's personality, she had to have hidden seventy percent of her actual powers, and those with a brain would realize that fact. In the end, this situation was caused by the greed of those who wanted to see her true strength.

They decided to turn this mock battle into a bigger event for that sake.

*'Oh, man… '*

Of course, I was happy because I had been missing old faces.

The news was sudden, but I couldn't stop smiling.

*‘Looks like Ha-Yan didn’t stay back at the academy.’*

If Jung Ha-Yan had joined the academy, I would have already heard any news about her one way or another, so considering the fact that I had yet to hear any news about her, she had to have gone into hiding.

Her top priority was finding Han Sora and me, and she had to have realized that the only way she could do that was to become even stronger.

*‘I’m sure she’ll find us within a few months.’*

Once she unlocked Detection Magic and Teleport, she would probably come to me right away, even if she was on the other side of the continent.

“Ki-Young.”

“…”

“Ki-Young,” Lim Cheong-Ha called out.

“Yes, noona?” I responded.

“You look like you’re in a good mood today,” Lim Cheong-Ha said.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yeah. I do see you smiling all the time, but your smile feels different today. Did something good happen?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

“I don’t know. I don’t feel any different. Actually, I’m not in a good mood because you suddenly came in while I was showering. Do you know how shocked I was?” I complained.

“Was I imagining things? Anyway… you heard that the content of the mock battle changed, right?” Lim Cheong-Ha asked.

“I did. The other academy and our academy are going to be fighting each

other, right? I'm feeling kind of down. It's like they prepared the mock battle so that it benefits the familias.

"However, I know they want to see just how powerful this group of trainees are… and I'm sure the GENIUSES wanted this as well, so it can't be helped," I said.

"Right? Well, it's a good opportunity for me, so it's not so bad… but since you already got recruited… it's natural to think that way…" Lim Cheong-Ha said.

"What? Who recruited me?" I asked.

"The Flower and Fertility Familia!" Lim Cheong-Ha answered.

"What?"

"I thought you were joining them," Lim Cheong-Ha said.

"I'm not…" I mumbled.

"There are some rumors that the Family and Fertility Familia are writing up a contract for a large amount of money. There are also rumors that they're going to recruit you as their vice-captain regardless of your result during this mock battle… I heard that Mr. William—"

"*Ah!* It's nothing like that. Wait, who did you hear that from?" I interrupted her.

"What do you mean? Rumors are bound to spread. Did you really not think that people won't notice that you're being called out often in the middle of class? And do you really think we're blind and can't see you hanging out with the members of that familia?

"Many people saw you having dinner with Mr. William two days ago. Some heard the rumors through the instructors, and I think the Flower and Fertility Familia were intentionally spreading those rumors," Lim Cheong-Ha answered.

“I just made a good connection. I haven’t thought about which familia I’m going to join. Mr. William is a great man… but joining a familia just on that alone is kind of—Of course, I’m considering it, but that’s all,” I told her.

*‘I’m already the owner, so there’s nothing else to think about.’*

I felt like getting a job as an external advisor and earning gold would be enough. Of course, William was busy sending me offers, but I wasn’t the type to accept offers so easily.

At the moment, I felt like the distance between us was perfect.

*‘If Sora is here, then isn't she supposed to visit me? Why isn’t she coming? Or does she not know that I’m here?’*

Had she assumed that I joined some random familia and was trying to get as much profit as possible?

*‘I would do that if it weren't for Woo Hyo-Yeol.’*

I couldn’t understand it.

If she thought I wouldn't join the academy, then why had she decided to join one?

I felt like she could have done her best to locate me as soon as possible. Of course, there was a chance that she assumed I'd create the Sunset Familia within a month and send her an offer.

I wanted to dismiss it as an unavoidable situation because we had no way of communicating with each other, but the more I thought about it, the more suspicious it seemed. I didn't want to think this way, but what if Han Sora…

*‘What if she wanted to start a new life?’*

She definitely knew better than anyone that it was impossible.

Besides what I stated earlier, Jung Ha-Yan would definitely find her someday. Of course, Han Sora probably just wanted to get away in the meantime. After all, escaping Jung Ha-Yan and my grasp had always been a small wish of hers.

I assumed that was the reason she decided to join the academy.

“Seung-Yoon should’ve gathered the party members in the cafeteria by now. Let’s go,” Lim Cheong-Ha suggested.

“Okay.”

“Students from the other academy will be there as well,” Lim Cheong-Ha added.

“That’s true,” I said.

*‘We’re going to see each other anyway.’*

I nodded and walked with Lim Cheong-Ha to the cafeteria.

I smiled upon seeing the cafeteria I had long become familiar with. I saw students moving around with food trays in hand, and as Lim Cheong-Ha had told me, there were students from the other academy here.

*‘Why do they look so serious?’*

Were they trying to show that they were proud of their academy?

For some reason, the students were divided, and they were looking at each other coldly. It was so tense that I thought the best fighters in each party were going to step up in a few seconds.

Perhaps they hadn't realized that they were going to leave soon, as it was such a strange sight, but in some ways, it was actually natural.

It was only natural to feel a sense of pride in one's group.

People familiar with each other would stick together, and since a mock battle was scheduled, they were even more on edge. There were also people trying to extract information somehow, so it was only natural they'd keep their guards up.

I was sure they were also aware of the fact that their lives depended on this.

"The atmosphere is pretty tense," Lim Cheong-Ha commented.

"It's to be expected. If it weren't for the mock battle, it wouldn't be this intense. Since there's a mock battle, everyone knows that they'll eventually have to fight each other. I assume they're worried about setting each other up… I don't really understand it, though. If the average age were lower, I wouldn't be surprised to see them fight," I said.

And that was when I heard a loud noise…

"What's going on? Is someone fighting?"

"Shouldn't we stop them?"

*'Why are they acting like children?'*

I was just hoping they wouldn't fight like beasts fighting over territory.

I was sure there was a reason behind this commotion.

They were on edge, and since they had to spend time in one space, their stress and exhaustion levels had to have been rising until they finally exploded.

It suddenly turned into a school drama, or was someone improvising in order to earn some coins? Something would always happen whenever people were gathered in one place, but why do things always happen in places like this?

"You're just a loser. Get up, you bastard."

"*Yaaaaaah!*"

One of them was a Swedish woman attending the same academy as me, but I forgot her name. Her talent as a warrior wasn't that bad. She was tall, like a model, and she was in pretty good shape as well.

However, she was short-tempered and often acted like a Viking warrior. Her opponent was a slightly short, young Latin American man. Seeing that he was on the floor, it looked like he couldn't handle a few punches and ended up getting beaten.

"That's why you should've kept your mouth shut. Or at least take responsibility for what you said. No matter who comes, they'll be no match for Han Sora? Bullshit. You're so weak," the Swedish woman said.

"I was just caught off-guard… I'm different in a real fight!" the Latin American man argued.

"Didn't you learn that you might get killed if you get caught up in situations like this outside the academy? Caught off-guard, my ass! If you feel so wronged, then get up. Let's fight for real," the Swedish woman said.

The kid on the ground bit his lips and stood up, but the result wouldn't be that different.

There was a huge difference between them physique-wise, and importantly, the Viking woman was pretty strong. She had also leveled up recently. As expected, the kid fell to the ground again.

"That's enough." A familiar voice echoed, and the Viking woman tensed up.

"It looks like the student at our academy has made a mistake."

"W-Who are you…"

It's been a while since I've seen those odd-eyes.

“S-Sora noona,” the man stuttered.

“Go over there, Christian,” Han Sora ordered.

“I’m sorry, noona…” Christian mumbled.

“It’s okay. You don’t need to apologize. It’s true that you made a mistake, but she was also childish,” Han Sora said.

“Let go of me!” the Viking woman shouted.

“I won’t let you go until you calm down,” Han Sora told her.

“You… bitch!” the Viking woman yelled.

Han Sora was really charismatic.

“What the… She’s Han Sora?”

“That’s Han Sora? Rank two in the tutorial?”

“She’s a monster…”

The extras were really good at exaggerating things.

“Someone get Woo Hyo-Yeol over here!”

Why?

Well, their best fighter had stepped forward, so it was only natural for our best fighter to step forward.

*'But did these guys really think that he’ll come just because they're calling for him?'*

Even from a distance, I could feel the pressure that Han Sora was emanating. I could see her pressuring all the rookies here with her mana without them noticing it.

Han Sora was an influential figure to the students. Unlike the students at this academy, who appeared to be disheartened by her presence, the students from the other academy looked proud. They also showed a lot of trust and faith in Han Sora, and she seemed to have long gotten used to that kind of treatment.

For some reason, she looked like she was loved by everyone.

"…"

"Thank you, and I'm sorry, noona," Christian said.

"Unni… is there anything we can help you with?"

"Go over there. I'll take care of things here," Han Sora answered.

It was funny seeing everyone use different titles to call our Sora, and Han Sora didn't seem to mind because she was taking really good care of them.

For some reason, I was sad.

I wasn't going to do this… but I had no choice but to take a few steps forward and make my presence known.

The crowd parted like when Moses parted the ocean, and I heard the extras shouting, "It's Lee Ki-Young. It's Lee Ki-Young!"

I wasn't even their spokesperson, so why were they expecting me to chase our Sora noona away?

We went way back.

I had been missing her to the point that I cried tears of joy upon seeing her.

"Sora noona…" I muttered

"*Huh?*"

“Are you… Are you really Sora noona?” I asked.

“Sub… guild… I mean… *ah*… noona? W-wait! I mean… this is…” Han Sora stuttered.

“Y-You’re really Sora noona, right?” I asked.

“…”

“*Heuk… hiccup…* Sora noona… it’s really you, right?” I asked again.

I saw Han Sora looking at me with a pale face.

“It’s really you… right, noona?” I asked.

I had no choice but to run to her and hug her.

“Noona… *heuk*… noonaaa…” I cried.

# CHAPTER 1099
# WOO HYO-YEOL (6)

I couldn’t help but cry. I had somehow encountered a friend upon falling into this world for no reason at all. I wouldn't be so happy to see her if we weren't close, but Sora and I had a special relationship.

I had yet to decide what kind of relationship we had, but the people staring at us right now probably had an idea as to what type of relationship we shared.

Of course, I couldn't define it myself, and I didn't want them to define it either.

It'd be more exciting if the relationship were to remain kind of mysterious, but it was undeniable that we cared about each other. I looked at Han Sora as if I were looking at a lover, a close friend, a family member, or perhaps a partner.

*‘I’m actually really happy to see her.’*

“Sora noona…” I mumbled.

“*Ah…* yeah… Ki… yeah…” Han Sora muttered.

“Sora noona. *Heuk…”* I cried.

Han Sora instinctively hugged me tight as well. It was like she was telling me that she wasn’t going to leave my side no matter what.

*‘You’re happy to see me too, right?’*

“You two know each other?”

“What the heck…”

“Really?”

“W-What… do we do… now? Hey, someone bring Woo Hyo-Yeol here!”

*'Why the hell are you trying to bring Woo Hyo-Yeol here? You really want to cause drama in a situation like this?'*

Everyone, except the one guy who made the useless comment, had already forgotten the small incident not too long ago. The Viking woman was no longer under pressure, but it seemed like she didn’t want to talk to Han Sora or fight with her.

As someone who had just left Earth, she definitely knew that it was difficult to find someone with whom one was acquainted in the past. Regardless of what had happened earlier, the Viking woman had no intentions of ruining this touching reunion.

“Sora noona… I knew it… it really was you,” I said.

“…”

“It really was you, noona…” I repeated.

“*Ah…* yeah… I-I…” Han Sora stuttered.

*‘Damn it, she’s having a meltdown.’*

I was sure she was having all sorts of thoughts at the moment. Not only was she not expecting to see me at the academy, but she was older than me now, so I understood why she was confused.

*‘Looks like she’s having a hard time adapting because it’s been too long since we did something like this. However, didn't I help her debut during the Park Mijin incident?’*

“I… *heuk… kgh…* I… K-Ki-Youuung…” Han Sora cried. Since she had no idea how to respond, she decided to cry first.

'*Looks like she hasn’t forgotten the things I taught her.*'

“Noona…” I mumbled.

“Ki-Youuuung… *heuk…”* Han Sora muttered, and huge tears rolled down her eyes. The guy who kept telling people to call Woo Hyo-Yeol stayed quiet. He realized that it was no longer the right time for him to make an appearance.

“*Um…* Sora unni…”

“Sora noona… do you know him?”

“Who is that guy?”

“Sora unni…”

Han Sora’s followers cast worried gazes at me, and I knew what they were thinking.

Han Sora was everyone’s idol, but she was suddenly hugging and crying with a friend who appeared from out of nowhere. They couldn’t really understand it, but I was sure that the sight felt strange.

I believed that they felt like I was taking her away from them.

They probably thought that they were special, as they fought together with her in the tutorial dungeon, but that wasn’t the case at all.

*‘I’m more important than them.’*

Christian—the guy calling her noona—looked downcast. He looked like he had lost everything.

“K-Ki-Young, it’s kind of embarrassing for us to stay here, so how about… we

go somewhere else… and talk…" Han Sora suggested.

"You're right, noona. I'm sorry. I was just really…" I trailed off before explaining, "I couldn't calm myself down… *heuk*… I never imagined that I'd see you again, noona…"

"It's fine. You don't need to apologize… I-I feel… the same way… Ki-Youuung… Let's go somewhere else first since there are other people here…" Han Sora said.

*'What are you looking at, damn it?'*

I stepped back and looked around. I saw Han Sora's followers staring at us awkwardly with trembling eyes.

"W-Who…" I asked.

"*Ah*… from the tutorial dungeon… A-Actually, let's talk elsewhere, Ki-Young…" Han Sora said.

"*Ah*, it's fine. If they're your friends, they're my friends as well… so I'd like to meet them," I told her.

*'How come you don't want to introduce them to me?'*

"Let's not do that…"

It felt like she was saying "Sub Guild Master, please," but I couldn't help but find that odd.

*'I guess she's always been an odd one.'*

"Hello," I greeted.

"*Ah*… hello."

"Noona, introduce me to them," I requested.

"*Ah…* sure… So, this is…"

Han Sora picked out a few people and introduced them to me, but I wasn't really listening. There was no reason for me to memorize their names, and if I really needed to interact with them, I could just use Mind's Eye.

"And this is… Lee Ki-Young… I-I don't really know how to introduce him…" Han Sora stuttered. Han Sora's cheeks turned red, allowing people to know what kind of relationship we had without her explaining the details.

*'We've slept on the same bed before.'*

Although Ha-Yan was in the middle, we were comrades who ate, slept, and lived in the same house. In some ways, we were a family. Moreover, Han Sora played a huge role in Jung Ha-Yan's family living plan.

"S-Shall we go… talk… elsewhere, K-Ki-Young?" Han Sora stuttered.

Han Sora seemed like she wanted to get out of here as fast as possible, but Christian, her first follower, looked displeased. He chimed in, sounding worried that Han Sora and I were going to disappear.

"Sora noona, regarding the preparations for the mock battle…"

*'Yeah, I'm sure you guys can prepare for it in this kind of situation… '*

"Christian, I'm sorry, but I don't think we'll be able to do it today… I'm sorry. The timing… is kind of bad… You understand, right?" Han Sora asked.

*'Why is he acting like he's really close to Sora noona? That brat.'*

"*Ah…* come to think of it, you came here because of the mock battle, right? Was I… interrupting?" I asked.

"No, you weren't interrupting anything… Ki-Young. It's nothing like that… but let's hurry and—"

“I’m sorry if I was interrupting. I’m okay, so how about we meet up later? Your party members are waiting for you…” I suggested.

“Sora noona, let’s do what he says—”

“Christian!” Han Sora yelled.

“Y-Yes?” Christian stuttered.

“I asked you to be understanding!” Han Sora yelled.

“*Ah!*”

*'That’s what I’m talking about.'*

It seemed like she was getting worked up for no reason, but things like this ought to be dealt with quickly and as soon as possible.

“How could you talk about preparing for the mock battle at a time like this? Was the commotion you caused earlier not enough? Do you have to put me in such a difficult situation? He’s like my younger brother, and we haven’t met each other in a long time, so I want to talk to him for now.

"Why is that so hard to understand?! The mock battle? If you were in my situation… would you be able to think about something like that?” Han Sora complained.

“N-Noona…” Christian stammered.

“I’m really disappointed in you today,” Han Sora added.

“…”

“Sorry, Ki-Young. Let’s go talk elsewhere,” Han Sora said.

*'Did you hear that, you jerk? She’s not your noona. She’s mine.'*

“Noona… what about…” I pointed.

“Don’t worry about him, Ki-Young. Let’s hurry inside,” Han Sora said hurriedly.

Han Sora grabbed my arm and pulled me away. After explaining the situation to the speechless Lim Cheong-Ha, I was dragged out of the cafeteria. Han Sora looked very anxious, but she calmed down a bit once we were out of the cafeteria.

She was starting to come back to her senses.

The moment she closed the door to this room, she said, “He's acting that way, but he’s a nice kid, sir.”

“…”

“You won’t harass him, right?” Han Sora asked.

*‘What the hell is she talking about?’*

“Why would I do that?” I questioned.

“*Ah*… I-I was just worried that he made you upset,” Han Sora answered.

“I’m not really upset… Actually, I was kind of upset, but I’m not a psychopath who harms someone just because I’m a little upset. There are times when I just laugh it off. Anyway, it’s nice seeing you again after so long, Miss Sora,” I said.

“M-Me too!” Han Sora shouted.

*'She doesn’t look happy to see me, though.'*

“I never imagined that I’d suddenly fall into this place. I wanted to find you, but I had no idea how to do it, and… I also knew that you were doing fine.

"I knew you’d graduate with a high score, but your score was *really* high. What did you do? *Ah!* The tutorial here is really strange, and there's the so-

called GENIUS as well.

"It’s different from ours, but I can tell that they've put a lot of thought into it,” Han Sora explained. She wasn't the type to talk a lot, so I felt like she was actually happy to see me again.

“I received a message from the God of Sunset asking me to find you as soon as possible, along with some coins. Is that the guild master?” Han Sora asked.

“Yes, it’s Hyun-Sung,” I answered.

“That’s what I thought after seeing his nickname. Have you figured out why we were summoned here?” Han Sora asked.

“Yes, I’ll explain that to you,” I answered.

“And about Miss Jung Ha-Yan…” Han Sora paused.

“…”

“*Ah…*”

“…”

“*Ah!* M-Miss Jung Ha-Yan…” Han Sora's eyes widened as if she had remembered something she had forgotten for a long time.

*‘She really must’ve forgotten about her.’*

She had long been dreaming of this freedom, and I was sure that she had been enjoying her life until now. She definitely felt like she had cheats on whenever she was around her followers who believed in her.

She had completely forgotten about Jung Ha-Yan, as she was no longer under the constant pressure of being around her.

*‘Ha-Yan will definitely be sad to know this.’*

Han Sora was aware of that as well.

“*Ahh…* What… what should I…” Han Sora mumbled.

“…”

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan… What do we do? Do you think she’s been eating on time? I’m sure she’s struggling, and she must be feeling lonely right now… What if she’s been crying all this while?

"I don’t think she joined an academy! *Ah!* The dolls that look like you… they're all on me right now!” Han Sora revealed.

“…”

*'Is this something to cry about? You looked like you had completely forgotten about her and had been enjoying your life until now… '*

“What do we do about… Miss Jung Ha-Yan? Do you know where she is? She’s doing fine, right? Right?” Han Sora questioned.

“…”

“She was really happy when she was told that the three of us would head to Rohen. She’s probably having a hard time right now, and I didn’t even think about that… Han Sora, you dummy… how… how could you do this?” Han Sora blamed herself.

Han Sora was suddenly suffering from separation anxiety.

“We have to hurry and find Miss Jung Ha-Yan!” Han Sora exclaimed.

# CHAPTER 1100
# WOO HYO-YEOL (7)

"It's already too late," I said.

"No, we *have* to find her," Han Sora insisted.

"No, it's too late. How can we even find her, considering our current situation? Even the GENIUSES don't know where she's hiding. I didn't bring my telescope either, so…"

*'She's not even listening to me.'*

"Sera… What about Sera? Right now, he's… *ahh*, our poor Sera…" Han Sora asked.

*'She looks completely out of it.'*

Han Sora had been chiding Jung Ha-Yan for her habit of biting her fingers every time she was anxious, but it seemed like she had inherited that habit from Jung Ha-Yan, as I could see her biting her nails before me.

Of course, she was different from Jung Ha-Yan, who would bite her nails until they were broken and bleeding, but it was a bad habit, nevertheless. Anyway, it was clear that Han Sora's mind was elsewhere.

"Who's teaching our Sera? There are so many things to teach him… Who is he eating and sleeping with?" Han Sora questioned.

"For now… there's Ji-Hye noona—" I said.

"That woman… she's kind of strange," she interrupted me.

*'That'll upset Ji-Hye noona.'*

“That woman only cares about her own children, and I can’t even understand the way she teaches Domi… She thinks Domi is some kind of computer. She’s lucky that Domi likes the way she teaches, but Sera is different from her.

"Do you even know how much attention Sera needs right now? He’s your child!” Han Sora yelled.

“Hyun-Sung is also—”

“The guild master is the biggest problem. I don’t even want to get started,” Han Sora interrupted me again.

“…”

“And what about that woman named Cha Hee-Ra? Do you really think Sera will do well being with those muscleheads? You know how sensitive and meticulous he is. His skills are just starting to develop, so we need to take good care of him. *Ahh! Aaarghh!* Why… why did I even come here?” Han Sora continued.

“…”

“Why… why am I here? Why did I agree to come here? Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Miss Jung Ha-Yan too… *ahh…* Our Miss Jung Ha-Yan… I’m sure she’s…” Han Sora mumbled.

“I told you, you don’t need to worry so much—”

“No, we have to find her!” Han Sora screamed.

“…”

“We have to! No, we should go back. We have to find Miss Jung Ha-Yan and return to the Blue Guild. Sera… your auntie…” Han Sora mumbled.

“Just calm—”

“How can I calm down?! Do you really think I can calm down here?!” Han Sora yelled.

*‘Hey… ’*

“J-Just think of this as a vacation,” I told her.

“*Ah!*”

Han Sora froze…

“*Ah…*”

“…”

It seemed like many different ideas had popped into her head in an instant.

She was nervous and anxious; she was also thinking about whether she was supposed to make a big deal out of this thing. Just as I thought that I couldn't deduce her thoughts, tears welled up in her eyes, and her pupils trembled ever so slightly.

“*Sob! Soooob!*” Han Sora cried.

*‘Why is she crying so hard?’*

I felt like I knew why she was crying so hard.

*‘It must be similar to when mothers get stressed while raising their children.’*

No, it was exactly like that.

She had just realized her predicament, and she was crying for some unknown reason.

*‘She is raising two kids.’*

Jung Ha-Yan and Seraphim, but I was sure Jung Ha-Yan required more work

because Han Sora needed to feed her and wash her.

Jung Ha-Yan also complained more than Seraphim, and if things failed to go her way, she'd become annoyed. She was no longer as bad as she was prior to the Park Mijin incident, but people wouldn't change that easily.

Jung Ha-Yan learned that she would get whatever she wanted even when Han Sora was in a bad mood, and she became more cunning upon discovering that fact.

Of course, Seraphim wasn't all that different either, but I was worried about him for a different reason. He was the black sheep among the four Outer Gods.

The problem was that he was too timid and sensitive. He would get hurt by trivial words, causing him to crawl deep into a hole, and it would carry over to his next task.

His caretaker, Jung Ha-Yan, was busy taking care of herself, while his other caretaker…

*'I honestly don't want to look after him. I tried, but I just don't like him.'*

They called me his father, but Han Sora was actually the one playing the role of his parents, so I wasn't surprised that Han Sora was stressed.

Now that I thought about it, Han Sora had been taking care of Jung Ha-Yan for the longest time now, so it wasn't really strange that she was stressed out.

The fact that she wasn't aware that she was stressed made it obvious that her stress had been accumulating inside her for quite a while now, but the problem was that she wasn't aware of it.

In the end, she acclimatized to her stress levels.

However, I was sure being Jung Ha-Yan's suppressor was the last thing she

wanted to be.

*'If she knew how many times she saved and protected the continent, she wouldn't feel this big of a loss… '*

But that wasn't important here…

*'Come to think of it, she looked like she enjoyed being a secretary.'*

Thanks to Sera, she had to stop fighting at the frontlines, but before Sera's arrival, she was *alive*. She was skilled as well—no, she was really skilled. At first, she was greedy and took care of more tasks than she ought to handle, but there was no one else as reliable as her, except for Jo Hye-Jin and Sun Hee-Young.

The problem was that she hadn't been able to show off her abilities.

I was sure Han Sora wanted to build her career.

She was a member of the Blue Guild, one of the best guilds on the continent, but carrying out her own tasks and being Jung Sera's teacher were two completely different things.

*'She got second place in the tutorial dungeon… '*

We were members of the attack team as well.

Perhaps the life she was leading in Rohen was her ideal life. I was talking about the fact that everyone was treating her well and the fact that she was a key player among the mainstream players.

She probably either wanted to create a guild, accept a guild offer, raid dungeons, or lead a mainstream project. One thing I was sure of was that when Han Sora first arrived here, she hadn't come here as Jung Ha-Yan and Seraphim's caretaker.

"I-It's your fault. *Heuuuk… heuuuung…*" Han Sora cried.

“Hold on…”

“It’s all because of you! You bastard!” Han Sora shouted.

“H-Hold on, stop! Stop it!” I yelled.

She had been slapping my arm, and it hurt more than I thought.

“You jerk!” Han Sora yelled.

“Wait, calm down for a second. Let’s do something else instead of looking after Ha-Yan,” I suggested.

“…”

“It’s because I understand what you’re feeling. It’s about time you took on your own big project,” I added.

“…”

“I’ll make a good position for you when we return. Is there a position you want?” I asked.

“…”

“…”

“I’m being serious,” I added.

“Dungeon Magic Investigation Lead…” Han Sora answered shyly.

“That’s it? You’re more talented than that to have that kind of position,” I commented.

“B-But… I spend a lot of time with… Miss Jung Ha-Yan and Sera,” she said.

“No, don’t worry about them. I’ll take care of everything. It’s about time Ha-Yan spends time alone,” I told her.

“I-In that case… I’d like to have a… Black Magic Workshop…” Han Sora muttered.

*‘Damn it, I haven’t made a Black Magic Workshop for her yet.’*

I wouldn't blame her if she was upset at me.

“I’ll give you full support, Miss Sora. I'm Lee Ki-Young, after all. Should I just build you a Black Magic Tower? I think it’s possible if I just deduct thirty percent of the funds used to operate the Alchemy Workshop,” I suggested.

“I-I’m… not confident that I can make the same level of profit as the Alchemy Workshop, and if you deduct the funds from the potion business, the guild members will surely say something. Miss Kim Mi-Young is really strict about things like that…” Han Sora replied.

“Research has always been expensive. I want you to achieve results, not make profits. It’s up to the guild to decide how to use the results of the research, and all you need to do is do research. If you have business ideas, it’ll be even better,” I explained.

“I-I actually have a few business ideas… and research journals I organized so that it’s easier to read… I wouldn’t call it a report just yet… *Ah!* I left it in my room, so I can’t show you,” Han Sora said.

“I have an idea of what they are without looking at them. But tell me, what are your ideas about?” I asked.

“They’re related to scrolls. It’s a scroll that can nullify thirty-three curses commonly used by Undead monsters on the continent. Unlike the holy water of the Vatican, anyone can use it even if they don't have priest-type jobs. More importantly, it gives the user a resistance to those curses,” Han Sora answered.

“Not bad,” I commented.

“R-Really?” Han Sora asked.

“I think it’ll be difficult for the Democratic Country to use it right away. However, we can distribute it to the Republic and see their reaction. I’ll contact Commander Jin,” I offered.

“You mean that?” Han Sora asked.

“Of course. So besides the workshop…” I paused.

“*Ah*, well I…” Han Sora paused.

“Yes?”

“There isn’t a specific position that I want, but I do want to join the meetings,” Han Sora requested.

“*Ah*.”

“I’d like to join the meeting you, Hye-Jin unni, Hee-Young, Unni, and Miss Kim Mi-Young have every month,” Han Sora said.

“So what you’re saying is that you don’t care what role you get as long as you’re involved in the management of the guild, right?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Then how about being a secretary?” I suggested.

“What?! B-But Hye-Jin unni—”

“I was actually thinking about promoting Miss Hye-Jin, so that role will soon be open,” I informed her.

“Don’t you think that’s too sudden? All I’ve done… was work around the guild as an ordinary guild member. I know I worked as your secretary temporarily, but that was only for a moment,” Han Sora said.

“All the guild members know how hard you’ve been working. The staff will

probably get confused, but there probably won't be any backlash," I reassured her.

"…"

"Telling them that you contributed a lot during the Rohen Continent incident will be enough to convince them," I added.

"*Ah!*"

"Of course, you'll need to achieve results great enough that people will agree with you filling that position…" I told her.

"Leave it to me," Han Sora said, nodding.

"I think we can start with managing the guild members who will be coming here. Your work will be really noticeable, and you can show off a bit. I'll also connect you to a GENIUS.

"You two can discuss it and bring them over. You understand what I'm saying, right? You just need to make adjustments within the limits permitted by the Rohen Continent's system. This is better than us splitting up because of the penalty," I instructed her.

"Right. I'm sorry for interrupting you, but if we're going to bring in the guild members, we'll need to create a suitable faction, right?" Han Sora asked.

"Yes, probably," I answered.

"So you're saying I can create a familia, right?" Han Sora asked.

"I think you just need to lay the foundation…" I replied.

"I think I can do that," Han Sora said.

*'It's nice seeing her so passionate about something.'*

“I’ll send you some coins, so make sure to get to work as soon as the mock battle ends. *Ah!* While we’re talking about the mock battle…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“You’ll smash it, right?” I asked.

Han Sora nodded.

“…”

"That’s why I came here,” Han Sora added.

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